

*I Lived
in Paradise*

Margaret A. Galloway

Presented to the Library by
Privately Published Publications





CANADA

NATIONAL LIBRARY
BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE

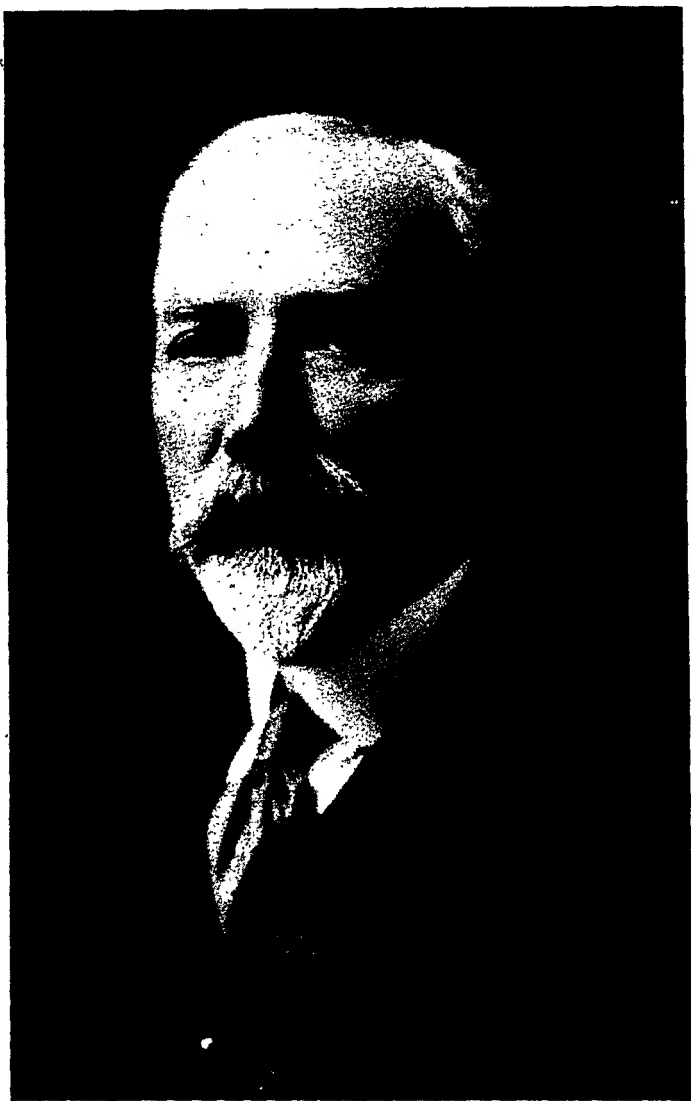
"Long, long ago
The memory still is dear"

Margaret A. Galloway
Brandon



I LIVED IN PARADISE

"The dreams of childhood — its airy fables; its graceful beautiful adornments of the world beyond; so good to be believed in once, so good to be remembered when outgrown."



MY FATHER — ROPER GALLOWAY



MY MOTHER—MARGARET ERB GALLOWAY



I LIVED IN PARADISE

By

Margaret A. Galloway



BULMAN BROS. LIMITED
WINNIPEG

135007

COMPOSED, LITHOGRAPHED AND BOUND BY
BULMAN BROS. LIMITED
WINNIPEG, MANITOBA, CANADA

*In abiding remembrance and in love so often
— too, too often voiceless — this little book
of memories is dedicated to my Father and
my Mother*

M.A.G.



FOREWORD

I have just finished reading John Buchan's autobiography.

To me not the least fascinating thing about the book is, not the story, not the facile use of English, but the arresting title — "Memory-Hold-the-Door."

If *you* were asked to make a list of ten or twelve of what to *you* are the most beautiful words in the English language, beautiful because of sense and sound — I wonder where in your list you would put 'memory'?

"Words are like leaves, some wither every year
And every year a younger race succeeds."

Yes, some wither like my "double-parlor," "sofa," "sideboard," — and "drawing-room," "chesterfield," and "buffet" take their places.

Dozens of entirely new words are coined to meet the needs of changing times, of a mechanized age, of new industries of peace and war.

Expressive slang is eventually accepted into good society because it is pithy and pointed and apt.

But words like "Mother," "home" and "memory" will never wither, never be outgrown nor superseded while the precious things they stand for remain.

"Mother," "home," "memory," — these are the first three words and that is the order of any list of mine of the most beautiful words in the English tongue. Soft, haunting, priceless words!

The pages of literature are crammed with lines, couplets, verses about all of these three, but I wish in particular to note here some of those referring to memory, whose

symbolism kindles the imagination and stirs the deepest emotions because my story is of memories.

We read of "precious ever-lingering memories" of "memories that bless and burn," of "the silent shore of memory." We read that memory "has painted this perfect day with colors that never fade"; that "memory plays an old tune on the heart," and now John Buchan gives us "Memory-Hold-the-Door."

He gives us too a theory that is, however, not new — that "Time hurries our youthful experiences away, never destroys but preserves them, and later quickens and amplifies them when we arrive at an age where we look backwards more often than forwards."

They say there is nothing new under the sun, which may be open for discussion, but at least a thing is new when first we grasp it or experience it for ourselves.

This backward look, this—we are assured—certain sign of advancing years, has compensations undreamed of before we reach the deadline.

Just offhand, I should have said that I remembered very little of my young days because I had never turned long enough for a good look.

Now, since that title touched some hidden spring in my subconscious mind, recollections each leading another out of the mist of years, come crowding pell-mell through the newly opened door — memories of people and of things; memories of fires and floods, of cyclones and hail storms, of blizzards and epidemics; memories of all the foolish unimportant things that children remember best and longest; memories of all the glad, sad, mad days when they were little — these are startling in their crystal clearness.

At my desk, here before a window, I am looking out upon a scene familiar for many years — rows of houses, tree-bordered streets and a vacant lot where in summer a piebald Shetland pony and a red cow graze in endless circles

on their tether chains, and in winter children make a short-cut path through the deep snow to school.

Perhaps, because I am in the mood and making a definite conscious effort to do as Lot's wife did, perhaps because I have reached that certain age when memories become so easily inverted, the near, familiar, contemporary things dim and blurred, and the faraway as clear-cut as an etching, the well known scene outside scarcely registers.

Instead, I see as on the silver screen of a moving picture, a strange child, a harum-scarum youngster, coat flying wide open, hair blown every way by the wind, running — always running — here, there and everywhere around a little prairie town — my home town, Paradise.

That's what a window can do for you!

To study, you really need to face a blank wall to keep your mind on the thing at hand, but for plain reminiscing your thoughts have to follow your eyes out, out into space and distance.

This standing-off and watching the child I was; is quite a different experience from that familiar at some time or other to everyone.

You know the feeling you have occasionally of looking over your own shoulder, critically appraising the conventional expected things your other self is doing and saying and wanting so desperately to do, and say something entirely different and shocking.

It isn't necessarily being cynical and unkind. It is just that we can't mingle with the crowd and wear our hearts (or our tempers) on our sleeves and expect to be accepted by people who behind their own personal protective screen, may not be as bright and gay, as good-natured as they appear. When we can't put up a show and act like normal human beings, we should stay within the shelter of our own four walls.

Fortunately, the imp that perches on our shoulder is invisible.

But here am I watching not others, but myself, go by, sympathetically, curiously, even critically, though maybe I won't let you in on the things (and there are many) of which I am critical now.

Many, many things done, I wish had been left undone, and many, many things left undone that I would give much now to have done, but being anything but a paragon, Nature took its course and nothing can alter the facts.

I am not so egotistical as to imagine you will share my interest in this particular youngster, an average child in an average pioneer town of the West.

Though the lives of each of us contain things that all together make history, this little book is in no respect a history. History is exact, and I am not interested in dates nor sequences.

Neither is it an autobiography — I am not so foolish.

Naturally and unavoidably my stories are personal because it is of MY town, MY home and MY people that I am writing. My dear old-fashioned home, my constant river-friend, my general store, my log church and school are YOURS too if you were young when the West was young.

Most sincerely do I hope that your memories of a childhood spent in any little pioneer town of the West may be revived, and by small substitutions of people and places, superimposed like a stencil over the background I have provided, you may be able to live those days again, and that you may find pleasure in this game of "Let's Pretend."

After all, this record is for my own peace of mind, and I hope, possibly, for my family's enjoyment.

I realize that I am not going about this business of story-telling according to accepted theories. Last Chapters are usually written first and vice versa, or you are thrown right into the middle of a story before you know what it is all about. It isn't because I am a bit fussy about having straight lines straight, and circles round. It is just because

there would have been no last chapter had I not had a foreword that mothered all the rest, including the one that rings down the curtain, with these two exceptions.

I wish to record my indebtedness and thanks to "The Pioneer," a small booklet published last Christmas by the United Church Young Peoples' union of "Paradise," Manitoba for some dates, and I wish to say "Thank you, dear," to my daughter who after busy office days spent endless evenings typing and re-typing my scribble with no complaint other than that my sentences were too long — not really a complaint, just a criticism and maybe merited.

M.A.G.

Brandon, Manitoba,
January, 1941.



Taken from north, looking south. The first log house at left of picture is Donald and Jim Adamson's home. Opposite to left, the McAskill home. Behind, and to right of Adamson's, the Presbyterian Manse. White house about centre is Mr. Dean's. Next, their hardware store. Post Office. Flat building is Cameron's Hotel. Back of Mason's house, McQueen's store (with new addition), Wilson's Hotel.

I

"Come back and lead again to Paradise the errant days!"

PARADISE was, of course, not the name of my home town, but to me it was a Paradise then, and in memory still is.

For convenience, however, it just has to have a name, and as it isn't considered good policy always to call a spade a spade, I have given my town a fictitious one.

This name I have chosen may or may not be an efficient or sufficient camouflage.

I don't wish it to rob completely my town of character and personality, but hope rather that it — this pen name— will serve as a fine veil, softening, not obliterating outlines, and rousing a provocative desire to lift it and see what really is behind it, and what reason, if any, inspired the choice of veils.

I am told that that is what any veil is supposed to, and does do — merely piques curiosity.

Happy shall I be if I may be privileged to hear doctors, lawyers, judges, ministers, business or other professional men and women — my erstwhile playmates and school friends — should they happen across these pages, exclaiming, "Gracious! That's MY old home town, and that's Maggie or Annie, Nellie, Minnie or May, Johnny, Bill or Gordon, why it's ME she is talking about!"

Sure it is! And I'm glad — so very glad -- that you remember and recognize them.

I should be very flattered too, and pleased, if I could think I had interested any of the real oldtimers, those con-

temporaries of my own Dad and Mother, and provoked from them a chuckle or a sigh.

My home town Paradise came into existence over seventy years ago — to be exact, in 1871.

That was the year after Fort Garry and the Red River settlements found themselves the geographical centre, as well as the actual centre, of the new Province of Manitoba, which had been admitted to Confederation in 1870. They were the goal of all immigration to the Northwest.

For some years before 1870 the tide had flowed up the great lakes, headed south across the International border from the eastern provinces and from the old lands across the sea. There in Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota and the Dakotas, the settlers for the most part found what they were looking for — good land, wood and water, and they looked no farther. They took root.

After the opening up for settlement of the new Province of Manitoba, many of these Upper and Lower Canadians, these English, Scottish, Irish men of Britain, instead of staking their homestead claims south of the border, continued on their journey. They turned their faces north again, coming up to Fort Garry from the south along the Red River and the old Pembina highway.

Fort Garry was by this time well established. It had a population of almost fifteen hundred. It was a half-way place, but not the goal of my settlers.

Trail-blazers in any realm have a vision, but with that dream they also have a restless urge that pushes them on and on, out of the beaten path towards this vision.

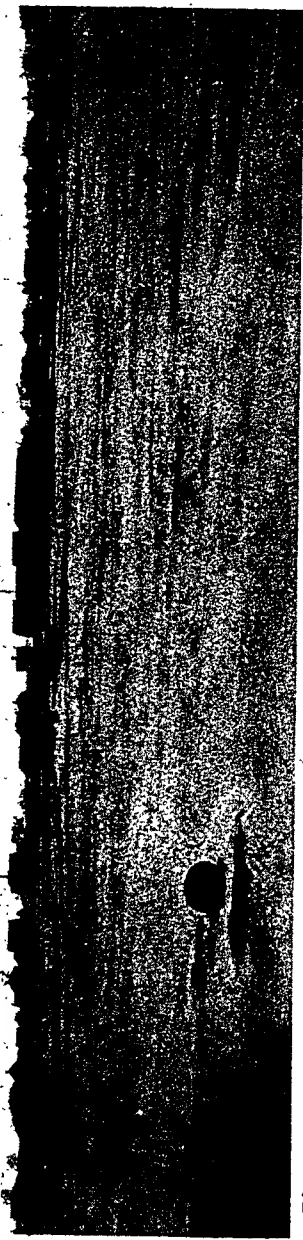
Most of us would like to be trail-blazers; most of us will admit having a desire to be or to do something out of the ordinary; to venture and adventure.

Too often circumstances are stronger than our will to do. It's so much easier just to follow along with the crowd, to be part of it rather than to lead it.

But pioneers are made of different clay, of "sterner



Road running east and west — now No. 1 Highway. First building on left, The Revere House. Mr. Dunning's house; J. L. Logie's Post Office and Stationery; Presbyterian Church in background; and next, to the right, the old school — second one, built in 1879.



Picture taken from the south of street running east and west; at left of picture is John McCrae's house. The Rintoul house. White house is the Windsor Hotel (Jas McAlpine's), next McAlpine's Livery stable. Galloway Brothers first store, bought from Davidsons. Other white building in centre is Queen's Hotel (McLeod's), Grist mill, Hotel, etc., of picture 1. Foreground, old school and the Presbyterian church.

stuff." They are stronger than circumstances, take and mould them to their way, or perish in the attempt.

The founders of Paradise stopped at Fort Garry only long enough to collect their settlers' effects, to stock up their wagons and tighten their belts before taking to the trail again, this time west.

This trail that beckoned and drew them on and on to far horizons, was called the Saskatchewan Trail. The name survives in one of the avenues of Paradise, as it does in other towns located on the old original trail.

Along it from all the trading posts to the north and west as far as the Edmonton post, even as far as the farthest Hudson's Bay Post, dog teams and dog trains brought out the trappers' harvest — their winter catch of furs. Along it later the established farmers hauled their grain to the grist mills at Silver Heights outside of Fort Garry — or Winnipeg. Prairie schooners, Indian travoys, Red River carts, dog teams, were all equally familiar sights.

Portage la Prairie was the last real settlement in the West then, except the North West Mounted Police Posts and the widely separated trading posts of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Here, at the side of the Assiniboine was a final checkup, and maybe a few days of rest, and then on again over the plains and the prairies.

I like that word "Prairies." It has a lift and a lilt to it that sings in my blood. If there is such a thing as reincarnation, I hope I may come back to them in some form or other.

I love what "Prairies" stands for — miles on end of rippling grass or grain, or of drifting, drifted snow to where heaven and earth join hands.

I have never come home from travels east, west, north or south, without a surge of happiness as the beautiful, curved scenic highways change to level, straight, endless — monotonous, if you will — "ribbons of grey." I know I am HOME again.

How do mountains and mountain streams, prairies and oceans affect *you*?

Are mountains just great heaps of earth and stone, and plains just earth laid flat? Are streams and rivers and oceans just water, a little or a lot, salt or fresh?

It all depends on where you were born, where you grew up and if you were happy there.

Everyone — that is, you and I — talks more freely, more feelingly, when they speak of what they love, only some speak more beautifully.

Listen to what someone has said who really has the gift of melodizing words, who has the ability to paint with words so tender and warm, so apt and accurate a picture that it becomes a living reality.

H. V. Morton loves Scotland, loves the hills of Scotland that are unlike all others, or else he could not have written:

"They are that blue, so blue and yet so soft that to look at it is to think of the islands of the Hesperides, or the land of the Lotus Eaters. It is a colour not of this world. It is a paint they use only in heaven."

I know the hills of Scotland. I love their soft, velvety "cuddly" greenness; I want to lie down on the heather slopes where the sheep graze quietly under the watchful eyes of collie and shepherd, where the little stone thatched crofters' huts nestle closely on their sides, and try to get saturated with their peace and loveliness. Even the inhospitable rocky crags of the Highlands, cold, grey and barren, are blue and mystical in the distance.

For me, because I too love Scotland, Morton has painted a picture I'd love to have colored, has sung a song I'd love to have sung.

Always when I read any of his books I can understand with my mind and with my heart just how Wolfe felt the night before the Plains of Abraham when, laying down the book in which he had just been reading Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," he remarked, "I

would rather have written that poem than take Quebec tomorrow."

Always too, I look forward to the day when H. V. Morton may come to Canada and write a story of her as she really is, and as it should be written.

To men and women born within sight and sound of the waves, with the tingle of salt on their tongues, the sea is life itself.

To others brought up in the shadow of hills and the everlasting mountains, these breathe solidarity, tranquility, security; these are an endless source of inspiration.

Over the entrance gate of one of our beautiful national parks is this inscription — "The Mountains Shall Bring Peace Unto the People."

The old, old hymn "Unto the Hills Around Do I Lift Up My Longing Eyes," pounds in my head. Those great, majestic, snow-capped aloof heights bring peace? Oh no! No! Not to me!

They break me up; they break me down; they leave me melancholy, utterly humble, conscious not of their greatness but of my own insignificance. They crush and smother me, and I want desperately to push them over and away, to get to the top of them where I can feel like something else than a worm.

The little tinkling, gurgling, laughing mountain streams coax you to join them in their play, to pull off your shoes and stockings and wade awhile, or lie down by their side and relax the tautness of body and mind.

Each time when I find them I think, "How perfectly lovely, and how soothing and restful to sit or lie here and not even think!" It's so cool and fresh.

"Come on, sleep! I'm waiting to be shushed and lulled."

But no chance. I'm prairie born and bred, and sleep doesn't come beside a noisy creek.

For half an hour or so it's heavenly; I love it. I'm almost over the border line. Then I like it. Then I'm uneasily

conscious, maybe a little irritated by the insistent chatter. I wish it would be quiet just one minute — or say ten minutes. Very soon I *can't* stand it any longer.

The sea, when it's rough and huge waves roll up and break into spray and soapsuds, or when it's quiet and the tiny waves creep in almost as if abashed and ashamed at their lack of spirit, lapping along the shore like a kitten drinking milk, is interestingly new and different, exhilarating or soothing. Then it's terrible and depressing, and I feel like committing suicide.

Have you ever felt like throttling a canary because it sang so persistently? I have. You buy a bird because it is guaranteed to sing.

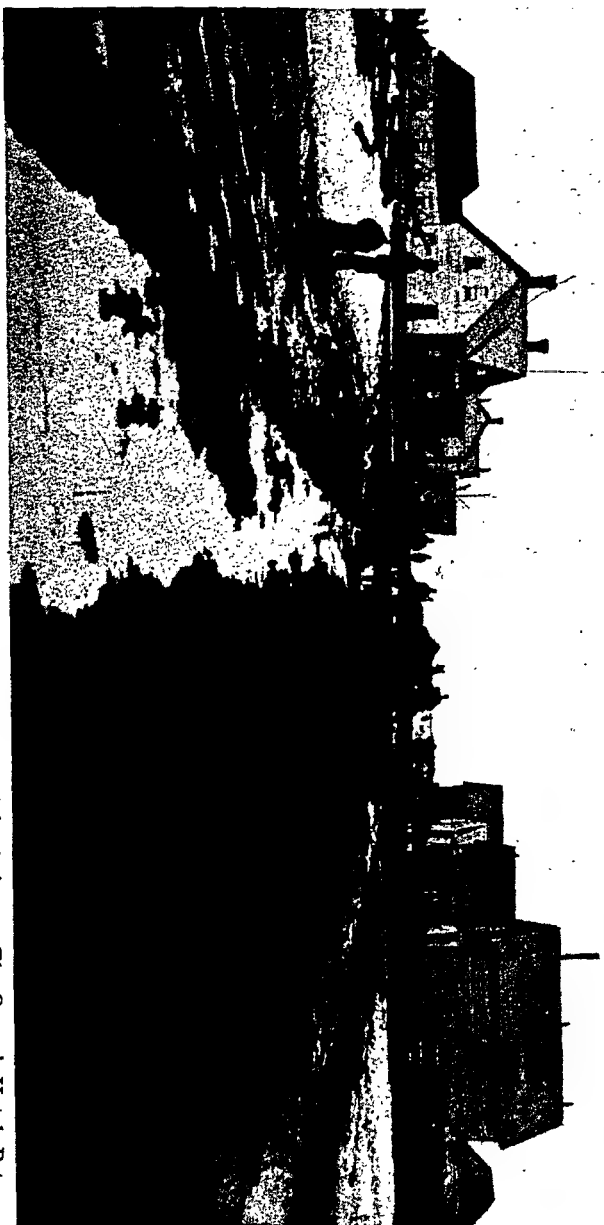
Have you ever felt like doing a Carrie-Nation on the blaring radio? I have.

Have you ever been at your wits' end at the close of a day listening to the chatter, to the laughing and the crying of children you love? I have.

You can throw a cloth over the cage to silence the bird; can turn a button on the radio to stop it, and you have peace and quiet. I'll admit it isn't so easy with the children. "Oh for Heaven's sake! Be quiet!" isn't very effectual, but you don't love the children any the less.

Nothing, nothing at all, not even the paralyzing hand of winter can stop the purling chuckle of a little mountain creek; nothing, nothing at all, not the clearest bluest sky and the brightest sunshine can change to a smile the haughty withdrawn austerity of a towering mountain peak. And the sea? Remember the story of King Canute in the old History of England, of how he sat in his gold throne on the beach and commanded the waves to be still, to go back and not dare to wet his royal feet? A lot of co-operation he received!

I know how the soldiers felt in the first Great War when, towards the end the big guns boomed night and day, day and night, with never a second to ease the tension.



Morris Avenue. Teams standing in front of the bridge over the river. On the left of picture, The Queen's Hotel; Peter Ferguson's store; Moodie's Age Office; Across river Malcolm's Cheese factory. Behind the hotel is Rev. Murchin's house. On right of picture, McQueen's store; Jim Doherty's Tin shop; S. T. Wilson's Hotel; C. P. Brown's Grist mill.



Taken from the south side of No. 1 Highway, across from the English church. Building on the left is James Doherty's house. The one on the right was the old Methodist church.

Psychiatrists or psychologists would maybe draw one conclusion from these so-called symptoms, these reactions of mine, to mountains and sea, and they would not be right — not quite.

It's not even the altitude, and it's not the climate.

Believe it or not, I love the sea and the mountains, but "you can't change the spots of a leopard" nor "teach an old dog new tricks" nor give an old girl new loves, so in winter and in summer, in fall and in springtime, in sunshine or in storm give me the prairies, MY prairies.

"These are the Gardens of the Desert these,
The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful
For which the speech of England has no name—
The Prairies."

That about evens us up with the French, who gave us "prairies." THEY have no word for "Home."

To get back to my wandering homesteaders. From Portage La Prairie west they went along the winding trail, around sloughs and swamps, skirting bluffs and fording creeks and rivers which often turned out to be the same old stream they had already crossed.

As they went, singly and in groups, wagons would pull aside at particularly desirable locations and claims be staked.

"First Crossing" took some, "Second Crossing" a few more, and then miles farther on, once more the river blocked their path, and if it were spring that river was a force to be reckoned with.

Perhaps it was at the end of a long tiresome day, a day made almost unbearable by heat and mosquitoes and black flies, by dawdling oxen, tired women and cranky, restless children, that the first prairie schooner to be seen in this district came to this third ford of the river that seemed to dog their footsteps, (or their oxen's); or maybe the river was in flood.

The prospect of shelter and water and rest was irresistible.

Camp was pitched; oxen turned loose; horses, if any, hobbled, and fires lighted.

Supper was on the way.

That night, lying awake in the wagon, or under it, or right out in the open under the stars, feet to the fire, hunger satisfied, a cherished pipe adding the right touch to make him at peace with the world, the man-who-made-the-decisions, the boss of the outfit, concluded that there, beside the river, wasn't such a bad place to camp for a day or two, get rested and re-organized, while he scouted around for a good location for the home-to-be.

He fell asleep.

Through the night the rising wind began soughing and sighing. The rustling, ruffling leaves of oak and elm awakened him.

Or it was the mournful hooting of an owl, the peculiar cry of the mosquito-hawk (like a heavy stream of milk against the side of a tin pail) that disturbed and made him restless.

Maybe it was the lonely barking, the long drawn-out howl of a coyote that made him sit up with a start, sent a shiver down his spine and tensed his ears for an odd Indian war-whoop.

Stories of massacres and scalping seemed terribly realistic in the early hours of the morning. The Riel Rebellion and the abortive Fenian Raids were still lively topics of conversation when two or three got together.

It seemed the act of a fool to go too far from civilization and possible needed help.

Maybe the women and children were the deciding factor in the choice between going on or staying put.

Possibly they knew all the time just exactly where they intended to locate their homesteads, and that they had arrived there.

I don't know the answer to the problem; don't know even if there was a problem. I don't know very much about

On the right is The Cameron's Hotel. House next is John Mason's Land Titles. Mike Nevill's Shoe Repair Shop.



it, but I could think up a lot of good reasons why these first settlers chose to stay at the third crossing of the river, and every one might be wrong.

As this is definitely no history, the why and the wherefor aren't terribly interesting, nor important. The fact itself is the real thing.

My Paradise was in the process of being put on the map of The Province of Manitoba.

For lack of a better name at the moment, and as a simple statement of fact, "Third Crossing," was what this little settlement was first called.

To settlers following, this name was not distinctive enough. To them this was the promised land they had left their faraway homes to seek; a land truly flowing with milk and honey. To advertise their realization of their good fortune, and to add a little religious flavor they changed "Third Crossing" to "Palestine."

I like "Third Crossing" much better.

Eleven years later, "Palestine" was in its turn discarded, or at least handed over to a small district to the south, and Paradise got its brand new name.

I wish they had gone back to "Third Crossing."

"Out where the handclasp's a little stronger,
Out where the smile dwells a little longer,
That's where the West begins.

Out where the skies are a trifle bluer,
Out where friendship's a little truer,
That's where the West begins.

"Where there's more of singing and less of sighing,
Where there's more of giving and less of buying,
And a man makes friends without half trying,
That's where the West begins."

II

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them how we will."

IT'S RATHER a comforting thing sometimes to be a Presbyterian and therefore subscribing to the doctrine of foreordination.

It's not supposed to affect your individual actions or responsibilities, but if what must be will be (or is it the other way around?) what are you going to do about it?

What can you do? Nothing.

Of course that is not the right and proper way to interpret the doctrine, but I'm not looking for an argument right now.

As a young lad, my father-to-be was about equally interested in India and Canada. Several near relatives — one, an uncle for whom he was named, had emigrated to India, and even after he had chosen Canada where no relatives had yet gone, books on India and its mutinies kept being delivered to my father.

But you see it was foreordained that Canada, not India — Paradise, not Delhi, should be my father's permanent home.

It was predestined that he should get the preference over my mother's other beaux.

It was foreordained that I — — —

Oh! the premises can be enlarged indefinitely.

Third Crossing, not First, Second, Fourth, Fifth or Sixth, was marked in the book of Destiny as the site of my Paradise before ever one settler fared west.

Considering the importance of the event, then let us look the location over.

The river on whose banks my Paradise came in existence so many years ago, I shall call "White Mud," much against my will. There should be nothing so definitely dull, so unromantically drab in Paradise, but White Mud is literally unfortunately true, and so it stands.

All around was what one day would prove to be one of the richest farming districts in this great farming province of Manitoba. It was an Eden; a neighboring community is so called.

The soil was deep black loam, and heavy brown loam like peat — part of the bed of a wide marsh to the north.

To the south several miles away stretched a solid trackless bush.

To the east from whence the settlers came — civilization.

And to the west — an unknown land of mystery.

At first only a few scattered log houses and shacks, the quickest shelter possible, and then on the new townsite-to-be there mushroomed up temporary buildings to house the various industries any little settlement must have — a grist-mill, a saw-mill, a blacksmith's shop, a tin shop, a cheese factory, a shoe repair, two or three small general stores, a livery stable, one or two boardinghouse-hotels, a private bank (where, they tell me, the current rate of interest 26% was unquestioningly, if grudgingly, paid), a post office, a log church and a log school.

One of the strangest things about some of these buildings was the impermanence of their locations. They were here on this lot today, apparently as settled as the Rock of Gibraltar. Tomorrow they had flitted like a butterfly to another lot on quite another street, and a different business had slipped into the spot vacated.

If you shut your eyes and went buying butter, you might find yourself in the tin shop.

Business went uninterruptedly and merrily on.

Fire, that plague of unprotected places, took an unfortunately persistent and heavy toll.

The first settlers were solid, substantial, hardworking pioneers, ready, willing and able to meet and down the usual dragons that stand in the way to block and dishearten all such in any new country — droughts, floods, fires, plagues, epidemics.

They asked for no quarter; they expected none.

They received none.

Disaster after disaster faced them and they held on.

However, before the town's roots were down quite deep enough to hold against such eventualities, the man-made boom of the early eighties was upon it, following the appearance of the first railway.

Fortunes made today on paper were wiped out tomorrow, as two years after the onslaught the boom-bubble burst.

Paradise's healthy growing childhood shifted into a fevered unnatural adolescence. It suffered a decline that nearly wiped it off the map, where such a short time before it had made its mark.

It's always the same. Anything, anybody, pushed too fast becomes top-heavy and attenuated. There is real difficulty in settling back into a normal stride.

Children whose physical development out-distances their strength, reach a stage where all their activities have to be retarded until growth and strength are balanced, or risk a decline. If their mental processes outstrip the natural growth of their bodies, they achieve the dubious notoriety of being child prodigies, and are almost just as certain to be headed for disaster later.

Children cannot stand booms in mind nor in body.

Plants over-stimulated into too rapid growth go all to stalk and leaf and are worthless for flower and fruit or seed. They haven't had time to develop the deep, wide, sturdy, root-system necessary to draw sufficient nourishment from the soil for present needs, and at the same time lay up a reserve for the future.

Plants cannot stand booms.

Some towns are in no better predicament. They jump up overnight because there are glittering prospects of immediate fortunes to be made in oil, in minerals, or even in wheat.

"All that glisters is not gold!"

The prospects exist only in imagination. It's another case of "wishful thinking" that we hear so much about today, and not in connection with farms nor fortunes either.

A boom is on, sometimes legitimate, sometimes artificial. There is no time to find out which. Outrageous prices that each day become more and more fantastic are paid for the doubtful privilege of getting in on the ground floor before even the foundation is dug. Up with the walls! Slap another story on above! Maybe it will stand another yet! Never mind the roof! And when everything is used up in the crazy skeleton, it collapses in a shapeless muddle, dragged down by its own weight.

Nothing is left when a boom breaks, when such a framework collapses; money, energy, saddest of all — courage — all lost in the end.

Hopes raised jubilantly, razed dismally. There are no reserves in stock to carry on and tide over until a brighter, better day which surely will dawn.

These boom towns — and there are many — begun with such rosy optimism, are one of the most depressing things a traveller sees in our middle and far west. While the saw-mills hummed, or the mines produced, or the oil wells gushed, or the crops were bountiful, everything was beautiful as a summer night's dream.

Let the mills or the mines, the wells or the farms, the single resource upon which the people drew, give out or even drop from the high peak, let disasters come too soon and too many, and the doom of the town is sealed, sometimes for years, sometimes forever.

Out the people move, bag and baggage, to greener pastures. It seems so much easier to make a new start in quite different surroundings than to start from the beginning all over again in the place where fortune once smiled.

Many of these mining, mill, and oil towns of the west are as absolutely abandoned as last year's birds' nest. The poor, deserted, lonely streets of boarded-up houses that were homes where busy people lived and loved, and little children played, the stores and hotels, the playhouses, even the saloons, are pitiful enough.

"A house that has echoed a baby's laugh,
And held up his stumbling feet,
Is the saddest sight when it's left alone,
That ever your eye can meet."

There is only one thing that is sadder, and that is the cemetery near these lost boom towns. These forgotten spots beggar description in their heart-breaking rayless desolation, bitter poignant reminders of the dark, cruel side of the pioneer life that has flowed on.

They are all the things I have said, these forgotten towns, pitiful, lonely, utterly desolate. Yet a choice of wandering the streets of a busy modern city, of going and coming in beautiful homes and up-to-date stores, or of spending some hours picking my steps around wide gaps in the wooden sidewalks, walking on tiptoe downstairs and upstairs in these ghost towns of the past, reconstructing in imagination the daily life of the women and men who lived there when the town was in its prime — why, for me there is no choice at all.

I'm fascinated, enthralled by the days that are gone; my mind is prodded on and intrigued; my heart strings are pulled this way and that.

Fortunately, average farming communities are more stable than mining, mill or oil districts. There is usually food to be had even when times are hard, though clothing and bedding are not so easily come by. There is a sort of

vicious circle developed; no crops — no money on the the farm, no money in the town — no credit in the city. Credit is no more unending from city to town than from town to farm.

Farms here and there are deserted, but not just overnight and in serious numbers, at least until recently in the drought areas. A failure here and a fire there, and sometimes doors are not re-opened because capital and credit are gone; but the honest-to-goodness pioneer doesn't quit. He just turns his energies in some other direction for the time being, hoping, waiting for his chance to come again.

Paradise was never in danger of complete eclipse, but it came so near it once or twice that it wasn't any joke. Years were needed to recover from the boom that struck like lightning with the arrival of the first railway and made the town itself bankrupt. Eventually it staggered to its feet once more, and limped along, and then with open arms and wild enthusiasm it welcomed a second transcontinental railroad.

The old boom-virus was still in the blood. Optimism bubbled up again; the bad old days were over; business was flourishing.

Paradise reached its peak of prosperity then.

It will never be the bustling city envisioned in the days when town lots were surveyed out on the surrounding prairie, and prices were asked and sometimes received for farms that might one day be within the city limits, prices that sound now like a good joke, if not a down-right fabrication.

There is nothing there yet to make it a city, except farms and farm products, and something seems to have gone wrong with farming.

Maybe someone someday will discover oil in the district — we hoped for it more than once, and then the unexpected may come to pass, and Paradise become a city, long overdue.

In the meantime it is by no means a forgotten town. The land is still as good as any, better than a lot. Given the right weather conditions, just as good crops in yield and grade can be raised as ever before.

Descendants of many of the first settlers still guarantee this faith, this vision of their fathers.

Days, weeks, years passed after that first camp was pitched at the third crossing of the White Mud River.

Routine of a kind was established. Business grew and prospered, but it was lonely in the long evenings that invariably got you into trouble.

Men who hadn't homes and families of their own began to spend more and more time thinking of the girl back east. Girls were at a premium in the west.

Some men went back for their brides; some brides travelled west to their grooms.

More pretentious houses of lumber and of brick, patterned after homes left behind, were the order of the new day.

Paradise, born one day on the banks of a river, was growing up along its edges.

"Thus times do shift — each thing his turn does hold;
New things succeed as former things grow old."



Oak Villa, July, 1894. Hops and a very narrow lawn, but dear me how brazen the "little house" is.

III

"Where we love is home,
Home that our feet may leave, but
Not our hearts."

NO! NEVER our hearts!

I wish I had been born on the open prairie, of parents trekking into the far West; not that it would have mattered much to me then, but it would have been a proud boast as soon as I was old enough to brag. Of course, Mother being as it were a party of the first part, would have rated a voice in the program, and probably would not have enjoyed the experience.

For other reasons too that privilege was not accorded me.

The country was already well opened up, had been for years. The stage coach was gone. Even the railway was no longer a matter of curious interest. Our home was permanently established.

However, for several years even after I arrived in a bitter December blizzard, there was no resident doctor, and only very limited unprofessional nursing attention to be had in Paradise.

In matters of life and death if you couldn't get or be taken to a doctor, he hopped the first freight or passenger train he could catch, and went to you. It was "on the knees of the gods" if he were in time or not.

Mother had gone back home to Ontario when my sister was born, but thank heaven though I cannot claim to be a native Paradisean, I am at least a native-born Manitoban.

As the important event in which I had a leading part to

play drew near, Mother and Dad took the mixed (freight and passenger), weekly or semi-weekly train to the nearest town that had a resident doctor.

There, in a ground-floor front room of the story-and-a-half town boardinghouse, counterpart of our own "Windsor House," a noisy Christmas present was delivered into the hands of my Mother and Father.

That boardinghouse was a landmark of note, well known and much patronized west of Winnipeg in the early days.

Gradually it outlived its usefulness. Newer, better hotels took the trade. It was left alone; doors and windows were boarded up; weeds and young seedlings were left in undisputed possession of its doorsteps.

About five years ago it was pulled down—I hope to save it the humiliation of giving up and dropping in its tracks. The spot where it had stood well over half a century watching the settlers coming and going, looking on at all the commonplace happenings of life—births, deaths, marriages, funerals, and more than likely some good rousing fights, seemed a bit queer and blank at first, like a child's mouth with a front tooth missing.

Strange to say, I, who had never known it in its palmy days when history of the West was in the making—history that it shared—never did manage any sentiment, only mild curiosity, as to what the inside of the place looked like, since the outside was so unimpressive.

The husk has nothing to do with the kernel; it is no yardstick of worth.

Such lack of interest, besides being against all precedent, is entirely unfair.

More than likely any average glib-tongued tourist-guide could have worked up real thrillers around the past of this old boardinghouse. Indian massacres, the Fenian Raids, the Riel Rebellions were cloth at hand just fitted to their need and their talents.

Many times have I stood spellbound drinking in their yarns, swallowing them hook, line and sinker, realizing at the back of my head that they were a special mixture 98% hocus-pocus, 2% truth, specially prepared for tourist trade. They were good stories; the less likely, the easier to listen to.

It is rather sad to realize that by the time Manitoba is old enough to be a tourist mecca for more than just a pleasant holiday, many old historical landmarks will have fallen by the wayside, or have been pulled down to make room for something new and modern; maybe not even a cairn nor a plaque will tell the passerby that *HERE* was something that belonged when the West was young.

It will be a sad day for those who would be interested, and a sad day too, for the story-teller who likes to finish up with "It happened right on this spot." It gives a basis for credence of the yarn.

That is what has happened to the little old log church of Bethel, one of the very first churches to be consecrated in Manitoba — outside of Winnipeg.

It stood through long summers and equally drawn-out winters beside the old trail to Brandon at Rat Creek crossing.

For many years on the first real highway that replaced the old road that forded the trail, a narrow one-way bridge led you around a sharp turn, shut in closely by big and little trees, right past the front door of the unpretentious log church.

Sharp, blind curves were not a menace in those days of leisurely, spaced travel.

Now the Trans-Canada highway with its standard long wide cement bridge crosses the sluggish trickle of water which doesn't seem to merit all this grandeur, *BEHIND* where the church once stood.

The road was of course changed to straighten out a curve that had become a real travel hazard, but when I am feeling sentimental, all this glory of pavement and cement,

this complete and thorough ignoring of the Oldtimer, seems a gratuitous, cruel insult — a slap in the face, a snooty, derisive, deliberate humiliation of an old, old friend helpless to defend himself.

Old Bethel was helpless, but, I like to think, not friendless nor quite forgotten.

Surely it was not the necessity of carrying out some by-law or other but the understanding thoughtfulness of someone who cared, that sealed the window-ears, the window-eyes, stopped the door-mouth, and made old Bethel deaf and blind and dumb in the interval before the end.

When you happen suddenly on a sight you cannot bear to see, catch the sound of cries you cannot dare to hear, when your agony threatens to break down your iron self-control, what is your involuntary swift reaction? Hands fly to eyes, to ears, to mouth, not consciously, but with an unthinking, instinctive protective impulse to double your blindness, your deafness, your dumbness.

Piles of wood and stone, buildings that have been homes or altars, develop a personality; they become a vital part of those whose life they share; they take on their general characteristics.

How often have you thought and said, "Why, your home looks just like you," or "This is exactly the kind of living room you would have."

It is very difficult and sad, very depressing and heart-breaking to be old and useless, where once you were young and needed, to be just shoved aside while the life you lived, loved, and savored to the full, rushes by, to be overlooked even by death.

Old buildings, like old people, would, I am sure (if only they could), choose the quickest, only way out into the sunset.

Euthanasia is not unkind.

Ears accustomed to the early morning songs of wood doves and meadow larks, to the evening cries of whip-poor-wills and night hawks, that had heard and loved the saucy chirp of the fat mother robins (or is it father robins?), and the mournful hoot of owls, and had thrilled to the thundering hoofs of the buffalo, could they be anything but distressed by the continuous stream of rushing, roaring, tooting trucks and cars that day and night fill the quiet air with clouds of acrid dust, and kill the delicate fragrance of wild roses and sweet prairie grass with exhaust fumes of gasoline and oil?

Eyes, young clear eyes that in summer had gazed far out over the limitless plains, and had followed the tree-marked course of the little meandering creek until it lost itself in the distance, that in winter watched the drifting, whirling snows bury everything from sight; eyes that had sighted the coming and followed the going of the lumbering prairie schooners, the dragging Indian travoys, the creaking, grumbling Red River carts, the dog teams, of even the painted Indian braves — how could such eyes now old and dim find pleasure in the changing picture of today?

The fields of grain stretch away to the horizon as did the billowing grasses; the oak and willow, the maple and wild fruit trees outline the path of the narrow creek as of old, and the snow still drifts deep, but Old Bethel's vision has narrowed to the road that runs by the door, like no road of yesterday.

Shut tight your ears, your eyes, your mouth, Oldtimer! The world blocked out, relive those hallowed sabbaths when the scattered settlers trailed in from every direction to avail themselves of the blessed occasional privilege of worship under a consecrated roof; of a chance to have marriage, baptism and burial sanctified by the church of their forefathers.

Listen again in memory to the ponderous solemn chanting of "Old Hundredth," as "Praise God From Whom All

Blessings Flow" is raised in unison; to

"O God of Bethel, by whose hand
Thy people still are fed,
Who through this weary pilgrimage
Hast all our fathers led."

It was a prayer from every heart to a God who really was their God of Bethel, for guidance of their wandering feet, for daily bread and raiment. Hear the sweet slow "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," the plaintive "Rock of Ages Cleft for Me," the yearning, mournful "The Sands of Time are Sinking," and breathe a soft "Amen" as "God Be With You Till We Meet Again" sends them out again on their homeward adventure.

Old psalms, old hymns, sung to the old loved tunes have something besides associations, that no modern version can ever achieve. Their heart appeal can never be surpassed, can never be equalled.

Personally, I always feel duped when fancy new tunes disguise psalms and hymns linked by ties of memory to our little log church in Paradise.

"We never needed singin' books in them ol' days, we knew
The words, the tunes of every one the dear ol' hymn book through
We didn't have no trumpets then — no organs built for show,
We only sang to praise the Lord "from Whom all blessin's flow."

IV

"Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam
Be it ever so humble there's no place like home;
A charm from the skies seems to hallow us there,
Which sought through the world is ne'er met with elsewhere,
Home, sweet, sweet Home."

IT WOULD appear that I have wandered far from the boarding-house where I was born to commune with Old Bethel, but really it was not so far, just part way home to Paradise along an old trail, though maybe a little round about.

Needless to say, I have no recollection of that boarding-house.

I do remember every nook and cranny of the house I was brought up in — the only home I ever had until I had one of my own.

I remember every twist and turn and eddy of the river that edged the big rambling lots where it stood.

I could go blindfold into every hole and corner of those lots.

Though many are now gone, I knew intimately every tree I later climbed, risking my neck as I went higher and higher, swinging and swaying "up in heffen."

Our house was built in the spring of 1883 for my Mother who came out a bride in the previous September to this "land of snow and wheat."

That first winter was spent in the "Windsor House" getting acclimatized and acquainted while she waited for the new home.

It's lovely for brides and birds to have brand new nests.

An eastern architect was responsible for the plans, and so naturally our house was typically eastern, and just as inevitably not particularly suited to the rigors of the strenuous northwest winters.

It was of buff-colored brick, and covered quite an area because of the size of the rooms, and was low set, the wide veranda that shared the front with the bay-window being just one shallow step off the ground.

There were three gables on the roof, and because of the style and the trees, and because most Ontario homes had distinguishing names, Mother called her new home "Oak Villa."

All around the base was a two-foot high banking, sodded, and the very dickens to keep cut, as I learned in later years. Around the bay window this banking in summer was crowned with dozens of scarlet geraniums. Many other plants were tried out for a change, but the banking dried out quickly, and the bricks drew and held the summer heat, so geraniums being the least temperamental and making the biggest show for the care lavished on them, were usually first choice — red ones because my father liked them best.

Around the two sides of the veranda and along a board walk leading from the side veranda to the back door, poles were set in the early spring for wild hops. These creepers soon made a thick screen that was delicately lovely when the graceful pale green hops hung in heavy clusters among the dark green leaves.

What a burn a bare arm or leg could get from a hasty brush of a straggling vine!

It meant quite a little work setting the poles up every spring — they had to be planted deep to carry the weight, and every fall after the first frost, clearing them of vines so they could be lifted and stacked away for the next year.

One Sunday on a walk across the river and through the woods in early September we discovered many of the trees, though almost leafless, were flaming torches of Virginia

creeper that hung from the branches like dripping Spanish moss.

We dug up some roots and replaced all the hops. Instead of lessening the attention the sheltering screens demanded, we had managed to get out of the frying pan into the fire.

Summer over, early frosts put an end to the growth of the hop vines. They were cut back level with the ground. Nothing daunted, they would start all over again when each returning spring brought back moisture and warmth and life.

It was different — quite different, with the Virginia creeper.

The sky was the limit.

There must have been a strain of Jack-the-Giant-Killer's bean stalk somewhere in that vine's past.

It took the wire netting around the veranda, placed there instead of the poles to give a helping hand up to Virginia, in one stride. It could easily have dispensed with a hand up. It pushed its searching tendrils underneath the shingles to their discomposure; clutched eagerly at the bedroom window screens, poking inquisitively and rudely right through to look around inside. With almost human stubbornness and stupidity it would pull the restraining staples out of the bricks when we tried to train it in the way we wished it to go.

It had its own ideas of where and how.

If you think it is easy to drive nails and staples into brick, even into the mortar between the bricks, try it a few times. Even with all the practice I had in building my play-house and in constructing pens for the pet of the hour, many a sore thumb or finger was mine when the staple moved and my hand didn't.

But I liked climbing, so the training job was mine.

In spite of never-ending ruthless pruning and trimming, much of that vine reached the ridgepole of the roof and started willy-nilly down the other side.

More than once my Dad threatened to tear it all down, to cut it right back to the ground, but he never did.

Moisture from the earth must have travelled miles more or less to supply all the ramifications of that ambitious creeper.

It was really nice in summer when it was in full leaf. It made our home look like an ivy-covered old country house.

All the other seasons were different. The first touch of frost turned the leaves rosy red, but first frosts were usually too severe. In a day or so at the most the beautiful flame was gone; the leaves brown and curled fell in showers with the tiniest breeze; the creeper was just a tangled mass of shabby wreckage shamelessly laying bare all the little empty nests of wrens and robins and filling them up with dead leaves.

Now that you have an idea of the outside of Oak Villa, let us go inside.

But first I'd like you to take a good look at the masterpiece of graining on the outside panels, of the heavy oak front door with its companion windows at the sides and over it.

John, the painter, was a brother of the Becky who ran a small fruit and confectionery store beside the track on main street and under the town hall.

He must have had the soul of an artist but being always told to do this and that while he papered and painted, had no opportunities for expressing his real ideas of beauty.

When the chance came to grain our big front door, he burst through all his inhibitions and really went to town in a big way.

He grained a knot in that suffering oak that would have made a satisfactory target on a rifle range at regulation distance, working the graining comb in all sorts of fantastic loops and whorls.

Graining is fascinating; it leads you on and on; teases you into flights of fancy, and has one big advantage.

Nothing that you accomplish is final; if you aren't satisfied with the result, one stroke of the paint brush and your ground is all ready to be worked on again. Just like your school slate is after an application of palm and spit.

Had that been a natural grain instead of a whimsical caricature, it would have merited an honored place in the wood section of the British Museum. Scientists would have stood in line to get near enough to unravel the twisted past of an oak tree that bore such a dreadful scar.

It was a good graining job, however, as no matter how often the other doors and windows of the house were painted, as long as we lived there, all the front door ever got was a coat of varnish and not even the finest line was blurred or blistered.

In winter it suffered a partial eclipse when a storm porch was fitted around it.

From a tiny hole in the door of this porch on a winter day of brilliant sunshine, and quite by accident, I learned one of the mechanics of the eye, or of a camera lens, when I saw the shadow of my sister outside reflected in an upside down miniature on the panels of the big front door.

A very little turn (a full twist would waken the dead), of the brass doorbell, and we are invited in.

"Eden is that old-fashioned house
We dwell in every day
Without suspecting our abode
Until we drive away."

V

"Home's not merely four square walls,
Though with pictures hung and gilded,
Home is where affection calls,
Filled with shrines the heart hath builded."

QUITE widely different things make words or songs or people — anything in fact — memorable in the real sense of the word, that of being easy or worthwhile memorizing, consciously or unconsciously.

The thing itself may be for the time being something, because it is commonplace and familiar, that you take for granted. You don't *think* about it, and how dear it may become depends not on *it*, not on *you*, but on how far away in time and space life carries you and what it does to you.

Listen to this — Morton again!

"All the time, although you are unaware of it, your brains are storing up every fraction of these moments, so that you will always remember the color of this evening, and the coolness of this water, and perhaps even the flight of the bat, and the screaming of the swifts, and you will still remember it although the names and faces of women you have known will have become like ghosts in your minds. You may wonder why it seemed so ordinary at the time. It is this bright pattern of simple memories that gives us roots on earth, and without them we are lost creatures, drifting with unanchored hearts."

Home! Dearly loved, well remembered Home!

Anything but just four square walls!

A shrine! A saving anchor.

Downstairs our house was divided almost exactly into three rooms.

The hall, where we are standing, in the centre, is no little cubby-hole of an entrance hall, but a real, a hospitable room. It is wide and deep, with a door at the far end, opposite the front door, leading out to the back veranda down the hop or virginia covered sidewalk to the back door. That is, it did in summer. In winter that door was closed and banked with snow outside, and usually pasted around inside with narrow strips of wallpaper.

That hall was really a bit of swank and kind of southern looking, as I know southern homes now. Only in the south they used their spacious halls as informal living-rooms where every one lounged around in comfort. Because of the through-draft and the added protection from heat provided by the rooms on either side, that was the coolest place on the hottest day, and likely the warmest on a cool day. Heat, however, was not our problem, and drafts were avoided rather than courted. Cold was our hôte-noir, and this roomy big hall, at the time it was built, was one of the places where the eastern architect hadn't used his brains nor taken into consideration western weather conditions, and the lack of heating facilities.

The staircase too was distinctly southern. It ran up the left wall, rested a bit on a landing that ran at right angles to it, turned on itself, and hurried up six steps to the top hall where it ended.

But the banister carried on past two bedrooms; right-angled again past the only two original clothes cupboards (such a silly place for them) and on to Mother's and Dad's room. Such an easy banister it was for sliding down. Its black painted rail was kept well polished by us as we slipped easily and quietly down its length to come with an uncomfortable plunk that almost snapped our spines, up against the sturdy oak newel post at the foot. We could wiggle the long banister a bit, but the newel post was as solid as if planted in cement.

There seemed hundreds of monotonous rungs to the banister when it came to dusting them.

In summer time, when we were little, the stair carpet was covered with a heavy cream linen runner with a red border; an easily laundered protection from children's wet and muddy boots.

This hall was always a lovely, cheerful, welcoming place to step into; so cool in summer and warm in winter, thanks to the huge box stove that radiated heat, day and night.

On the oilcloth floor beside the stove was a sheep-skin rug of a violent magenta shade. Land knows where the dye originated. It was probably vegetable; possibly beet.

Whatever that rug lacked in artistic value, it made up for in other ways.

It was snug and cosy for small bare feet and kittens.

On the right of the hall is the double-parlor.

The door of the front parlor is open, so in we go.

Funny — the only things you associate with parlors now is beer, or beauty or burials.

There is an oblong marble-topped centre table which we used to think would make a good tombstone if you polished the rough underside as smoothly as the top; now I think what a grand baking sheet was passed up.

On it the red velvet family album with the brass "Album" scrawled from corner to corner. It was full of funny old-fashioned photos of Mother, her relatives, her friends, and her beaux. There were bustles, basques, and well-buttoned bosoms; there were furs, feathers and stove-pipe hats; there were whiskers of every length and shape; there were bald heads galore. The same line-up in Father's plain black leather album beside it; his relatives and friends and old girls. All posed stiff and stern, held motionless by the long iron bar that ran unobtrusively up their backs, with the iron semi-circle that clutched their heads behind the ears and steadied them; hands grasping a book or a photograph, or someone else's hands, or laid coyly on someone's shoulder. Not a single toothy smile in

the lot; getting your picture taken was a serious business. Photography has gone a long way since then. At the back of the albums, tin-types, much less formal, and mostly the work of itinerant photographers who worked the country, pitching their tents in any convenient central spot and moving on when prospects failed to appear.

We liked to go through the old albums on wet Sunday afternoons, discussing the interesting possibilities if Mother had married that stupid looking man, or if Father had tied up with the buxom lass with the heavy braids wound around her head, who was Father's "best girl" until he came to Canada and promptly forgot her after he met Mother.

The big brown and gold family Bible, a wedding gift to our Mother from her Mother, had an honored place on the marble-topped table too. It had such lurid pictures in the old testament that it was better than our own books.

They never give family Bibles now as wedding gifts. It seems too bad to have discarded that custom.

An old-fashioned, round-backed sofa (no chesterfield) and matching chairs, two little black stools covered with needlepoint, an odd chair or two and a cradle-rocker.

Do you remember them? A great clumsy over-stuffed piece of furniture on a cumbersome wooden base; you rocked squeakingly back and forth by the help of heavy steel springs while the base remained stationary. Any room had to be fair-sized to accommodate one of these antiques.

In one corner, a five-shelved what-not lives up to its name with a litter of bric-a-brac, treasured bits of china, a Dresden shepherd and shepherdess, some pieces of Wedgewood — wedding presents all, some odds and ends of pottery, a little blue nun with a white head-dress that had held pomade when Mother was young, a clay Highlander and Fishwife; souvenirs of my Mother's childhood, and loved because they reminded her of her Mother and her old home. Gradually beside these, our treasures accumulated

— birthday mugs and plates, china dogs and cats, our first number 0 baby shoes.

Some of this what-not bric-a-brac is in my china cabinet, on my plate-rail now, priceless, doubly precious to me because haloed with memories of my Mother's storied young days, as well as of my own.

There is a piano too in our double parlor, a rosewood Mason and Risch — one of the first west of Winnipeg, and one of my Mother's most prized possessions. The front of the piano above the ivory keys had three carved and fretted wheel or rose-windows backed by gleaming red satin. The satin was never changed in all the years; the rosewood retained its original smooth lustre till after twenty years or so the company took it in (on another, of course) to be used (they said), as a showroom advertisement to prove that even the extremes of no heat and too much heat in the wild and woolly West were all to the good in the life of an honest piano.

If the double doors into the back parlor were closed, as they usually were in winter, you can be sure a hooked rag mat or a quilt is in the making — quilts and mats as we grew older, we liked to help complete.

The quilting frames draped around with shawls made a very satisfactory tent or playhouse when a quilting bee was not in progress.

One of these shawls, a very special favorite because of its size, was my grandmother's in the first place. I could weave it from memory now (if I could weave). It was a soft light tan color with an all-over plaid in shades of brown, and it originally had a heavy long knotted fringe. That fringe got pretty thin and raggedy after several years of daily use, and then one day I lost the shawl.

Sometimes when Mother had special company in the front parlor, perhaps the minsiter, or maybe some one we didn't particularly like, my sister and I would tip-toe into the back parlor and take turns peeking through the crack

in the double doors. We'd go through in pantomime the company's and my Mother's actions for each other, as of course we could hear the conversation perfectly. When our giggles could no longer be held in, we would beat it for the kitchen and lift the lid off.

Remember the same thing in your house?

There was furniture in the back parlor — the second best, demoted from the front parlor. Nothing special except one rocker which you could let down, down, and down, until it was absolutely flat on the floor.

There was a dummy fireplace, a narrow mantle and a chimney without a firebox or a grate — just a boarded-up hole. This deficiency was hidden from the public eye by a discreet maroon felt curtain, embroidered on the floor edge in a design of pinky-red strawberries with white blossoms and green leaves.

A little pink cashmere dress I wore when about eighteen months old, and which I had on in my first photo, has the same small design done all in white. I still have this dress, now somewhat peppered with tiny moth holes.

Chimney martins for years claimed the chimney as their own, their sway disputed only by the bats that were nowhere visible in daytime, but at night whirled and swooped under the verandas and among the trees.

Single bats often got into the house and came darting into the first room that showed a light at night. There was always the chance of them blundering against the lamp and knocking the glass off, but the thing that scared us most was the possibility of them getting caught in our hair (you could never disentangle them, and had to have your hair all cut we'd been told) so we'd beat it with arms clutched around our heads until Mother, her head tied up with a towel, arrived, shut the door and battled it out alone with the bat.

—The bats flew in and out of the chimney all night. The martins flew in and out all day, building their mudhouses

inside, raising successive batches of babies and making an awful racket most of the time. We couldn't dislodge them as we could the mud apartments the swallows plastered under the eaves.

On either side of the chimney were love seats (it's a quaint suggestive name) also with maroon curtains to the floor, behind which we kept the stereoscope and the boxes of pictures, the bean bags, odd games like "Fort," some books and piles of music.

We could hide there indefinitely when an Indian raid was on, or when Simon Legree's bloodhounds had almost caught up on us.

There were pictures -- large gilt framed oil paintings of cows knee-deep in water, and of sunny landscapes. I don't know how good they were. Certainly they weren't impossible daubs.

There were almost life-sized pictures of my Mother's Father and Mother, rather like soft engravings -- a dour old gentleman with a mop of hair around cheeks and chin that looked as if it had slipped off his bald head that had only a fringe around his ears -- a dear, sad-looking lady with a lacy white cap and long side-ringlets. Little wonder she looked weary. She died quite young, but she had five sons, five daughters grown up, and I don't know how many (the number I remember is impossible, even counting the twins), died at birth or soon after.

I thoroughly detest photo enlargements, but these two in their deep wide gold frames seemed somehow to belong. I felt a little twinge when Mother and Dad were leaving Paradise and sort of clearing the decks of things we didn't want, to see the sad lady and the sober old gentleman come down off the wall, out of their frames and, broken into bits, go into the fire. There was no twinge though over the big picture of Uncle Bob, Mother's blustering bachelor brother who came west in the fall for shooting. As long as

he lived, as long as he visited us, his picture hung on the wall beside our Mother's parents.

Haven't you put on display photos when the original is coming, that you shove out of sight the rest of the time?

On the other side of the hall was the dining room, just ordinary as to oval table and chairs and combination book case and writing desk, but in a class apart when you were face to face with the sideboard. We never heard of a buffet for many years to come.

This sideboard occupied most of one end of the room. It was the only piece of furniture in our house, not even excepting the piano, that didn't flit around at spring and fall house-cleaning just as a matter of course, and light in a new spot. Like John the painter and the knot on the front door, the designer certainly let his imagination run away with him when he fathered this atrocity. Maybe it was something he saw in a nightmare or in his cups. It was marble-topped like the centre table in the front parlour, white marble with brownish-black veins showing through it like the blue veins in hands of the very old or the sick. It was two-storied with a little balcony, a half-story above the second. There things were put that were meant to be out of reach.

Something of the same type of sideboard, almost a blood brother except it had no marble top, stood in the dining room of one of my chum's homes in the country.

This business of having things you wanted to play with in sight but just out of reach, proved more than Jack could bear on one occasion. After several abortive attempts to get next to the coveted object, he had recourse to the old Adam ruse of involving a female in the crime to share the punishment.

"Let's get the broom and knock it down, Winnie."

They did.

She did.

On the cool marble top of the sideboard, tatted or netted

doilies, a pewter cruet with crystal casters for pepper, salt, mustard, vinegar and olive oil. Everyone used cruets then, but my son saw them for the first time on dinner tables in the old country when he was grown up, and was so impressed with their strangeness yet usefulness that he described them in detail in a letter home, as a personal discovery. Maybe he had nothing else to talk about, and the cruet news served as a filler.

There was a roll-top plated butter dish, a tall cake stand, and a huge ice-water pitcher that tipped back and forth on a frame, since you never could have lifted it had it ever been used, (which it wasn't). It was a wedding present of Mother's from the choir back east. It would have watered a threshing gang. You see the same antiques used now in church communion services.

Useless nuisances! Sure!

I have, everyone has wedding presents of no more practical use — just a perpetual bother to try and keep them polished and presentable against the odd time they are in use.

Choosing a gift is a difficult assignment. Usually people buy for a friend something they like, something they themselves would like to receive, and ten chances to one the friend has other ideas. I'm all for tying a label on such gifts, "From A.B., on such and such a birthday or anniversary, or Christmas," and the date, putting it carefully away and say in five years giving it back to the one who bought it. It would have to be appreciated.

The lower part of our sideboard was filled with seldom-used silver plate and pewter, all tied up separately in white canton flannel bags. It was roomy enough to be used as a hidey-hole when hide-and-seek was in progress.

Carpets right to the baseboard everywhere but in hall and kitchen and over the kitchen.

We had a pantry of course, like the clothes cupboards, in the most outlandish place, under the front stair.

It was always well stocked, so well in fact that I can't figure out now where in the world the food all went. Without a refrigerator things had to move fast.

The top right hand shelf was for assorted medicines and all the common first aids.

The other shelves were for food, food in such quantities I only dream of now. Platters of meat, fresh and cured, were protected by oval wire screens. Three-storied layer cakes, iced with rich brown chocolate or shaggy white cocoanut, jelly rolls or Spanish buns, jars of fruit and pickles filled the spaces on the shelves.

On the floor, crocks of cookies, of shortbread, of oat-cakes and twisted fried cakes, were convenient and always available to small greedy hands.

It was fun to watch the fried cakes being made, dropping out of sight in the hot grease, and then one by one bobbing to the top and rolling over. Mother would cut out boys and girls especially for us, fixing them up with currant eyes and mouths, and buttons down the front. They would swell up, maybe lose an odd eye or pop a button in the swelling, but come out the most perfect golden brown.

Never soggy nor greasy; not too dark nor too light, but exactly *right*. It seemed almost a shame to mutilate them, so we'd go about it very carefully, gingerly nipping off an arm first, then a leg. With some misgiving the head went next, and then all that was left — the big, fat "tummy," and down it went with no regrets.

Once when a sack of flour had been stowed away in the pantry with the usual flour dust on the floor, we had a thrill of expectation when we saw a snake had slithered in the open side door. Its wavy trail was unmistakable, but once in, like Lucy Gray, it vanished into thin air, or down a mousehole, as no amount of searching discovered it, and it was never seen nor heard of again.

Since we had no refrigerator, milk and cream were

lowered down a deep unused well and kept beautifully sweet unless there was thunder.

Our first back-kitchen was only a lean-to with an earthen floor. Cut split wood was piled around the sides. In winter a box or a barrel each of chickens, turkeys, beef and pork frozen and packed in snow. Always too, a sugar barrel partly filled with balls of rags, cut and wound in separate colors ready for the next hooked mat.

Rag mats have come back into fashion again. It has become quite a hobby to braid or hook colorful rugs, and the finished article is a beautiful artistic affair, all smooth and clipped

Mats then, were made on grain or potato sacks, the patterns freehand drawings of birds and beasts and flowers that "never were on land or sea." They were made then in a hurry, when time wasn't a drug on the market, to fill an ever present need for warmth on cold drafty floors.

But if usefulness is beauty, then by that standard they were beautiful.

Hobbies of any kind are worth-while as an escape valve.

It helps a bit when you are all out of tune with things that have gone out of kilter, to make a blue rose, to give what is supposed to be a robin a green vest instead of its everyday red. It bolsters your ego to be so omnipotent, and by the time the deed is done, your mood may be changed. Whenever your mood is disgruntled again, the blue rose, the robin green-breast look up at you accusingly. "See what you did to us when you were bad tempered before." You just have to smile at your childishness.

The summer kitchen with the wooden floor, the extra stove and table, that in due course replaced the outgrown dark little lean-to, was never nearly as interesting.

Over the kitchen was the hired girl's (another anachronism) room, if and when we had one.

We had good girls — Kate, Bernice, Rosie.

We had girls who weren't so good at first, who did improve marvelously under my Mother's tuition.

One of these was Annie, a little foreign girl who came to us directly from the Immigration Hall in Winnipeg. She couldn't speak a word of English, but she was young and bright and willing, eager to learn, and so, presumably teachable.

She kept a little book in which she put down her own word and our equivalent.

Mother did the same in reverse.

It was neck and neck for a while, and a matter of doubt as to whether Annie would learn English before Mother learned Doukhobor.

One of the first times Annie was left to do the supper dishes alone, Mother tried to tell her to be very specially careful of a certain vegetable dish. It had thin handles that stood well out from the ends of it. Mother, with a good deal of use of her hands pointed to them and repeated forcibly once or twice, "Good! Annie, good!" Annie smiled and agreed. She knew what "good" meant — "Dobra! Mrs., Dobra!" That seemed settled, so Mother picked up a piece of paper and tore off a small corner. "Bad! Annie, bad!" Annie smiled and nodded.

We were all going out.

When we got home later, into the kitchen first thing went Mother. Everything was in order. The supper dishes were put away. On the kitchen stove, laid side by side near the poker, were two airy-fairy handles—off as clean as a whistle.

Something had gone wrong with the English lesson.

Poor Annie, who really didn't know "good" from "bad," thought that was what she had been told to do. She used the poker.

Poor Annie!

We have all been Annies at times — all wrong when we thought we were all right. It's discouraging.

It was once that my Mother talked too much, according to my Father.

Annie became a splendid maid and an excellent cook, but for quite a while you were apt to catch her around the kitchen in the morning barefoot. Boots, no matter what the size and width, irked her. She claimed they hurt her feet, unaccustomed to these articles of civilized wear. Sometimes she would forget and put the pot full of potatoes or corn on the table right from the stove. Many years later she took a position as cook in a Fort Rouge home at a top wage.

Then she married.

When the room above the kitchen hadn't an occupant, we depended on different half-breed girls or squaws to scrub the floors, help house clean, and wash the clothes out under the big elms in the back yard.

There was "Harriet," "Big-Fat-Mary," "Little-French-Mary," and "Old-Mary." Some Mary more often than any others whose names didn't stick. We never spoke of any of these without their distinguishing adjectives. They were all part of their names.

Later there was Galician Annie, who could have posed for a soap "ad" she was so clean and shiny, and who always brought us a little flat round cake of Dutch cheese wrapped up in a snowy towel.

With no hired girl, this over-the-kitchen room was half storeroom, half playroom.

The ceiling was low and sharply slanting at the sides.

The pipe from the kitchen stove came up and wandered around, so no matter how the rain beat against the window, or the snow drifted outside, we children were safe and warm there playing house with our dolls.

In the storeroom half, tomatoes and cucumbers ripened slowly on the floor under newspapers and blankets. Hops from our own vines were spread there and turned over day by day until they were dry and brittle and ready for yeast,

or for including with the ones shipped to Winnipeg for wholesale druggists, from the store.

We had no storeroom in the modern sense, cluttered with useless odds and ends of everything — boxes of this and bundles of that hoarded against the day when they might be useful or fashionable again, if the moths weren't too active. There was no broken furniture, nothing temporarily set aside.

There was far too much real present need. A new baby, a death, a burnt farm house, and off went everything my Mother could scrape together of extra or outgrown clothing and bedding.

Thus was "forged that chain of friendship, of links of kind thoughts, encouraging words and loving deeds" that bound the pioneers together.

No one was given my Father's old suits, underwear and boots, but Michel.

Michel was a pure blood Indian — a Chief in his own right, "of ancient race by birth, but nobler yet in his own worth." He had all the virtues of his own race and I don't think any of its vices. Like my Father, he was well over six feet tall, well built and straight as an arrow. He was good-looking too, with strong regular features, even white teeth and a wonderfully infectious laugh. He had a keen sense of humor.

It was never customary for Indians to knock at the door; they just walked in without ceremony. He would chuckle and laugh as he told us children of the first time he walked into our kitchen.

Mother alone, just a brand-new bride, turned at his grunted "Ugh," to see this towering Indian, hair falling in two braids down the sides of his face, a strip of bright cotton around his head, arms folded over his shoulder blanket, standing in the doorway.

Her terror and panic were instant and unaffected. She

knew all about the dreadful things that happened to lonely settlers when the Indians came.

Michel would go through the whole affair in pantomime. Drawing himself up tall as possible, he would strike an attitude and growl, "Ugh, Ugh!" Then he'd take off Mother white and shaking as if she had D.T.'s, finally managing in a little quavering voice, "What do you want?"

Michel would tell us stories of things that had happened down in Pembina, Minnesota, where he was born.

His English was limited, but all Indians seemed to be past masters in the art of painting vivid word pictures by gestures and sounds. By turns he was a big clumsy bear slouching along berry picking; he was an antlered moose nibbling the little new shoots high up on the trees; he was a frightened little boy hiding in the bushes peering out at the hated Sioux in their war paint; he was in the midst of a massacre or out on a buffalo hunt.

Some of the Indians lived all winter through in log and mud huts in the bush to the South. Lou's home was just across the road and she remembers them distinctly doing odd jobs in and around the house all year round. Particularly clear is her recollection of one night that they kept up a powwow around the fire until morning, sort of a wake after one of their tribe had died.

Michel and "Little-French-Mary" his wife, weren't among these, but every spring they turned up from somewhere in Paradise, and pitched camp near town.

They brought baskets of all sizes and shapes, of red willow trimmed with peeled willow, and peddled them around town, mostly for old clothes or something to eat.

She helped around the kitchen, scrubbing, cleaning and washing, as I have said, and he helped outside.

He planted, raked, hoed the garden and the yard. He transplanted trees for Mother. Together they set out all the maples of both our avenues. He would dig a well or

move the "little house." In fact, anything that needed doing he could be trusted to do — and do well.

Then a reservation was opened on the shores of a nearby lake.

By and by Michel, whose life had always been lived in the open, or at least in tents, lived now all winter long in an airless, mud plastered one-roomed log shack. One cold followed another. Proper food, warm clothing, were not to be had.

Michel developed that scourge of the Indians when they adopt a part of the ways of civilization — Tuberculosis.

For a while he still came to us.

Soon he was not able to work.

His chest was sunken, his shoulders slumped. His hair was graying. He coughed and gasped. He never stopped smiling as he spread his hands and counted off on his fingers the weeks at a time he lay on skins and blankets on the floor beside a fire in a log hut at Sandy Bay.

Mother still kept all Father's old clothes — suits and woolen underwear for him, but they hung on his once tall strapping frame like the trappings of a scarecrow.

Then he didn't come at all.

We would hear sometimes about him from the other Indians who came down. Mother would send back food and medicines.

With genuine grief we learned at last that he was off on the long traverse to the happy hunting grounds of his forefathers.

Good hunting, old Michel!

Truly you take your place with all of "Nature's noblemen."

I have intentionally left our kitchen to the last because I loved it best of all the house.

It is like the icing on the cake that children save up until the last — the climax to the goodness of the cake, and the taste that you want to linger on your tongue.



Old Louise and her granddaughter.



Old Louise on our kitchen floor.



Harriet kneeling

Good icing can bolster up even indifferent cake. It is the ne plus ultra of good cake.

Our kitchen didn't need any bolstering up.

It was square, large and light, comfortable and cheery every season of the year. Most of all, when the weather was cold and stormy or wet.

Overalls, moccasins and shawls were as equally at home there as the best clothes the factories could supply or clever fingers put together at home, and all were welcome.

A window on the northwest, one on the southeast where my Dad used to sit in a very special chair, smoking and reading, wooden wainscoting halfway up the walls painted a bluish grey, or an orangey yellow, paper above in a rambling kitchen pattern — both papering and painting my Mother's handiwork. Along half of one side, cupboards; on the opposite wall by the door, a wooden tin-lined sink with a dark hole below where we stuffed papers and bags until Mother got fed up because it was never tidy, and ripped it out. She spared the sink however, and one day long after, it served its original purpose, when it was given a drain pipe that ran water away into a sunken barrel.

Underneath the floor was a big cement cistern, dry until it went into action with the sink.

Then old Michel had another job every other year — pumping out all the water he could, then climbing in, slushing around with a broom what was left, before dipping it out by pailfuls.

We children sat around on the floor beside the open trap door in reserved seats, hoping to see something more than a dead bird or a drowned bat in the murky goulash of mud and water, leaves and seeds.

The sink, the cistern, the dummy fireplace in the back parlor, even the spacious, gracious halls were kind of misfits in a country home of the eighties in Manitoba, even though they were standard equipment in Ontario.

Varnished kitchen chairs, a well scrubbed deal-topped

kitchen table, a bustling shiny wood stove, a shelf over the sink with various sizes and styles of coal oil lamps, a clock that ticked and tocked and struck the hour as if it were rather annoyed and in a desperate hurry to get the job over; on the painted floor several hooked mats where impossible cats and dogs sported, and bouquets of multi-colored flowers blossomed — that was our kitchen, commonplace, comfortable, clean, cheerfully cosy and homey.

In contrast to the white enamel and chromium equipment, the monometal table tops, the tiled walls and inlaid linoleums, the indirect lighting and the absolute perfection of every little detail in itself and in relation to everything else, including the uniformed cook of the modern kitchen laboratory of today, what was it?

Positively much too large for convenience, probably poorly arranged what there was of it, possibly insanitary, and completely lacking in most things considered essential today.

But with all those deficiencies and drawbacks, it radiated a personality, an individuality and a warmth of hospitality that in memory at least outdistances the operating-theatre type of modern kitchen.

It was the centre, the pulsing throbbing heart of home, the keynote for a song of happiness.

Old blind toothless Louise is there, kneeling on the floor in a patch of sun, bright handkerchief around her straggling graying hair, shawl around her shoulders, full gathered cotton skirt and apron covering her beaded buckskin moccasins. She is sitting on her heels chuckling and talking softly to herself as she sorts out by touch the contents of the old cotton square in which all squaws carried everything given to them in their day's rounds — everything from soup to nuts.

Giggling young squaws are there nursing their babies or lacing them up when lunch was over in the cradle affair they carried on their backs. On these papoose-boards the

babies were literally packed in sawdust, or if you prefer exactitude, in punk — the inside of rotted trees rubbed soft and fine. All you could see of them when the head shawl was thrown back over the top was a little round brown face and a mop of thick black hair. Papooses seldom cried.

Cattlemen, farmers, townspeople are there, free and easy as they never would have been in the double parlor.

My Father, my Mother, are there.

I am there, kneeling on a cushion on a kitchen chair pushed up to the end of the table, rolling, poking, squeezing a lump of dough that was soft and bubbly and white and now has advanced through various shades of "tattle-tale gray," and in the process has lost every single one of its original characteristics.

I shut my eyes now, and the fragrance of newly baked bread is all around me. In my mouth is the unforgettable taste of thick hot crusts, saturated with butter and piled high with dark brown sugar.

Blot out the memory of the parlors if you must, of every other room in the house if you will, but leave me my perfect memory of that heavenly spot — our kitchen.

"It takes a heap o' livin' in a house to make it home,
A heap o' sun and shadder, an' ye sometimes have to roam
A'fore ye really 'preciate the things ye lef' behind,
An' hunger for 'em somehow, with em allus on yer mind."

VI

"He who loves an old house,
Never loves in vain.
How can an old house
Used to sun and rain,
To lilac and larkspur,
And an elm above,
Ever fail to answer
The heart that gives it love?"

IF YOU think I have been unduly loquacious, have spent too long a time within the four square walls of my old home, pick up a pencil and paper and start to write about something or somebody you love, or have loved and lost, and you will forgive me. You will also need many sheets of paper. You may be as dumb as a sphinx usually, but give your thoughts and feelings rein and your pencil runs on and on and on. It just will not stop.

After a little trial yourself, then maybe you won't mind wandering around the grounds of this shrine of mine.

A long curving avenue of maples — my Mother's and Michel's work, led from the far end of "The Crescent" where our lots began, to the front door, and on around to the back.

If you drive up in state there are big gates you have to open. If you are walking or even riding, the little side gate lets you in.

This is the way we went to school, to church, to the train and visiting. This is the way most callers come to us, sauntering along listening to the birds calling, and the red squirrels scolding like young machine guns as they follow

you along, jumping from tree to tree. If it is winter you pick your way carefully, one foot ahead of the other along the deep sleigh ruts in the road, until you meet the path cut and shovelled to the front door.

Along the river bank to your right at every season of the year but winter, there is almost certain to be half a dozen bonfires of dead leaves and brush smouldering, as year by year we cleared closer and closer to the water's edge.

I love the smell and smoke of bonfires.

In the spring there is such a sparkling exhilarating quality in the air, such a pressing urgent invitation to be outside and growing with all the little new buds and shoots. There is an eagerness and a suspense you can't deny — at least when you are young. You are all expectancy for something lovely and exciting that you know is going to happen the minute you are awake in the morning. Why?

"I know not how such things can be,
I only know there comes to me
A fragrance such as never clings
To aught save happy *living* things,
And through and over everything
A sense of glad awakening."

That's youth and spring!

Just as you make everything spic and span inside the house for coming guests, so you get the urge to clear away all the signs of the long winter just past — the broken matted branches, and the piles of sodden drifted leaves underneath, to be ready for the thrilling days to come.

The hazy, smoky, growing days of spring are as utterly different from the equally lovely hazy, smoky days of autumn as waking is from falling asleep, as life is from death.

The big uneven lawns on either side of the maples are widened every year until the limit of the fence and the scrub line on the river's bank is reached.

The grass on these lawns is closely cut — not one spear of wild timothy or of couch grass must be allowed to mar their perfection.

The grass is only native prairie to begin with as a base, but lawn grass and clover seed are broadcast thickly as a booster after the first warm spring rain starts everything off in high.

The ground was never levelled, so there are dips here and bumps there where the roots of oaks and elms haven't dug down deep enough.

For many years wild strawberries snuggled down in the grass and tried to carry on in the face of the most adverse circumstances. We watched them develop from the first white blossoms, get green, then white, then faintly pink and we could hardly wait for the pink to deepen into red.

With an egg cup to hold the loot (we weren't too optimistic as to quantity) my sister and I went peeking under every leaf. If we were fortunate enough to find a dozen berries each, we were as proud as peacocks when we carried them in to Mother as a special treat.

Mother being wise in the way that Mothers are, ate them, knowing well that even though our mouths were watering we enjoyed watching her exaggerated pleasure in the tiny sample far more than if she had insisted on our eating them ourselves.

That is when you catch the exquisite flavor, the delicate tantalizing fragrance of wild strawberries, just savoring them one by one.

Maybe a dish full of berries swimming in cream and loaded down with sugar is more satisfying to the appetite, but not to the soul. You can have too much of a good thing. The piquancy, the stimulating palate-pricking of wild strawberries should never lead us too far in this matter of indulgence. Satiety is, to say the least, vulgar and inartistic.

They know how to serve strawberries in the old lands — a big dishful of berries freshly picked, hulls still on, or a

dainty basketful, the bottom covered with cool green leaves, a smaller dish of fresh water to dip each berry in before rolling it in powdered sugar, or dipping it in clotted cream.

That's an artist's way to serve strawberries, and to bring out every little mite of flavor.

Service of food is a rite they know and enjoy performing.

We haven't the time to be artists at the everyday job of eating.

The preliminary work has all to be done in the kitchen, and our berries come washed and hulled to the table, and usually sugared. It's a timesaver, but not epicurean.

However you might treat cultivated berries, the little wild ones just couldn't be served à la nature; but they are utterly delicious anyway you are lucky enough to get them.

For many years there was a patch of potatoes along "The Crescent" fence and a lot of berry bushes — red, white and black currants, prickly gooseberries and raspberries. They were an awful nuisance to pick for jam and jelly when you weren't hungry for fruit "on the hoof."

Eventually the lawn in its broadenings, wiped out the potatoes and pushed the berry bushes right off the map.

The wild strawberries with the violets and buttercups, the blue bells, cowslips and roses, gave up the unequal struggle with the lawn mower.

There was nothing to dispute the ground with the grass but dandelions.

Flowers are like people in their response to attention.

You can care for them, love them, watch over them, temper light and shade, heat and cold, water them carefully and consistently, and in spite of all your pampering they fade and die.

Others you definitely neglect and overlook. They take it all in the day's work and, wanted or not, flourish like the proverbial green bay tree — whatever that is like.

Flowers have definite personalities too, just like people.

That first welcome harbinger of spring — the anemone that we call crocus, for all its delicate silky softness is at heart a hardy, courageous adventurous pioneer. It has a mission — to announce that the long cold winter is over and spring is on the way, and weather or no weather, that message is delivered. Over its delft blue dress is slipped a silvery grey angora windbreaker, and in those chilly April days you can hear everywhere the children's glad cry, "M-o-th-er, the crocuses are out." Every shallow soup-plate in the kitchen overflows with the loot from paper bags and pockets.

You know people like that whose meek and mild exterior is just a blind for their real-self. They don't argue; they don't get mad when it might seem justifiable. They just say "All right," "Yes," or "No," as the case may be, and there the case rests. It is of no further interest to them.

Buttercups and violets are weak and shy and easily discouraged.

Lady slippers and orchids are decidedly temperamental. Everything — soil, moisture, shelter, has to be just exactly right or they won't play.

Cowslips are utterly brazen. They'll grow anywhere, in the ditches, in the fields and along the dusty trail, and to soften their impudence, their yellowish orange flowers have a superabundance of honey (remember how you used to suck it from each trumpet floweret?) and a spicy unforgettable perfume.

The touch-me-nots live up to their name and are peevish, impatient, irritable.

The pitcher plant, unique in color and form, is for all its beauty, tricky and false, and an awful glutton.

Some plants, like the silverweed, are open and above board in their travels from place to place. Their runners set out on top of the ground from the parent plant with no effort at concealment, take root and begin a new life.

Others, like the lily of the valley, in a determined effort to propagate their species, send their probing roots under planks or rocks, all hidden from sight and secretive, then up they pop somewhere unexpectedly.

It's like setting a dog to watch a gopher hole, and he waits and waits. All the time the gopher has slipped out the back door and is busy somewhere else. Only you can forgive the dainty lily anything.

Some plants are homely yet healing, some charming yet poisonous, some graceful and decorative, some lovely but stiff and unbending — just plain up-stage. All have their human counterparts.

But dandelions!

First thing in the spring when very few other plants have the temerity to appear and face the uncertain weather, in millions they push up their fluffy yellow heads on long juicy stems and shout, sure of their welcome, "Hello! we're here!" Along the highways, in the pastures, beside the creeks, in your pocket handkerchief lawn, it's all one to them. Any kind of soil, any kind of weather, just as long as their friend the sun is on his job, they look up and laugh out loud. Run them down with the mower day by day, send their heads and leaves flying to the four winds, and what happens? The leaves get smaller and smaller, and lie flatter and flatter on the ground. Humbly the flowers cringe lower into the heart of the parent plant until they are practically stemless — they are just flat yellow buttons, quite beyond the reach of the lowest set mower-blade.

Do they sulk and at last give up discouraged?

Do they pine away and die because they are not appreciated?

A thousand million times No!

Leave them alone just one day or two, and bright as a dollar up they jump, every slight, every injustice forgiven and forgotten. They seem to be saying, "I know you didn't mean to be unkind, so it's all right old man! I'll not hold it

against you." Their powers of recuperation, their never-say-die spirit, leave you aghast and definitely annoyed. You dig and cut and cut and dig and then *you* are the one to give up in despair and desperation.

They say a shot of gasoline given hypodermically or a pellet of salt jammed right into the heart of each dandelion plant is the only way to kill them.

Anything with such "joie de vivre" deserves to live.

Looking around in every direction in spring and early summer when they are in their glory, I can imagine no more hopeless impossible task than trying to get rid of them forever. It is fit to rank with some of the punishments of fable and of history.

It might even merit consideration when Hitler, Mussolini, and all their bloody, bestial confreres are judged and punished when this war is over. Nothing the mind of man could piece together would be extreme enough. An order to eradicate dandelions with lashes when one flower reappeared would be a starter.

When we were old enough to have some work to do, I liked the outside jobs best — weeding in the garden, raking the lawn, cutting the grass.

I would divide the length and breadth by one tour of the mower into continents or countries.

It was far less monotonous to canter into India after racing through Africa, then into Scotland, than to go methodically, rhythmically up and down, the whole way from the front door to the gate, the way my Father did. His way he was finished all at once, but my way I had the satisfaction of a completed job multiplied over and over again.

In front of the house various geometrical flower beds — round, square, diamond shaped, claimed attention with all the old-fashioned favorites, pansies, verbenas, phlox. Always sweet-scented stocks and mignonette — my Mother's favorites.

This broad, leisurely winding road with its wide welcoming gates is indeed "the primrose path of dalliance," just as "straight is the gate and narrow is the way" through still another avenue of maples that led from the other side of the grounds out around "The Crescent" to the store and business.

This was a little-used path because we were the only ones living along or at the end of it then. We picked our steps carefully; even running we kept a wary eye on it ahead, as in every season but winter, of course, on the bareness of the path garter snakes liked to coil and bask in the sun.

There were any number of these horrid, harmless little black and yellowish white striped snakes because of the near-by river. Naturally we weren't really afraid of them. If anything suitable were handy — a hoe or a rake, or a big stick, we would try to make them one less, chasing them as they streaked surprisingly fast through the long grass for the safety of a gopher hole.

We never tried to follow my Father's methods of execution — a good long step or two to catch up, and a heavy heel on their heads. It makes me shiver even now when I think of how they used to wriggle up over his boot as he held them fast. He would even grab their tails and finish them off with a quick jerk that broke their necks, or by knocking their heads against a fence post.

We thought him very brave not to be even a tiny bit scared.

Once in the garden Mother killed a particularly large specimen which at first we thought was a brand new variety — a horned one.

Investigation and a little amateur dissection, however, proved the horns to be only the hind legs of a partially swallowed frog.

They tell you the tail of a dead snake waves back and forth ceaselessly until the sun goes down. We found out

that a dead snake is just as dead, just as motionless, half an hour after as at sundown, whatever the method of killing.

They tell you that if you cut a snake into bits and leave them close together, they will jiggle together and unite, and presto! there is your snake again. No matter how close to each other we left the pieces, nothing ever happened, and we tried it often.

It is sort of satisfying though, to scrunch a snake's head thoroughly; maybe a hangover from the hate engendered in the garden of Eden.

My Father took in trade for store accounts, wood of all kinds — oak, elm, maple, poplar, by the single load and by carload lots. In the fall and early winter when work was slackening and the farmers started to deliver these loads, our back yard was a sight. Long, high rows and rows of cordwood, neat double rows of cut split wood.

This wood was cut and split by Michel and Francois or Francis. After school we would help to pile it into its tidy lines, or maybe hindered as we outlined the rooms of an elaborate playhouse. We made these houses too, at least the ground floor plan of leaves, when we were supposed to be raking, and it was an unforgivable breach of etiquette if you stepped over the low wall instead of going through the door.

We never tried to build, in fact I never saw, the fancy beehive stacks of firewood you see in some farm yards now.

To this day, when I have no need of it, a good straight woodpile makes me more than a little covetous and homesick.

It would have been unwise to have gone into the winter without a good reserve of dried wood; it wasn't so easy to draw when the snow lay deep in the brush, and we burnt a great deal of wood in our various stoves.

At the first approach of cold weather, stoves were taken

from the places where they were cached in the spring and restored to their former glories of the past winter.

There was a box stove in the dining room, the pipe going up to Mother's room and joining the pipe from Mother's stove before being lost in the chimney between the two hall cupboards.

There was the small heater in our room, the pipe from this meandering through the wall into Uncle Bill's room where it met the pipe from the hall stove, and went into the chimney where the martins lived.

The only place that never boasted a stove of its own, or a festoon of pipes, was the double parlor, and that was why this formal company room was usually closed in winter, and visitors were entertained according to their status in kitchen or dining room.

Several times during the winter nights my Dad got up and made the rounds of all the stoves, shaking up the fires, piling in slow-burning oak with the poplar, and banking, so we wouldn't freeze stiff like the water in the pitcher and that we could dress in comfort in the morning.

The stable, fifty feet away or more, was directly opposite the back door. Past it was the vegetable garden, my Father's pride and joy. At the side of the house nearest the river, clothes lines strung from tree to tree.

Lots of room for everything and everything in its place for-keeps, except the "little house," that on occasion wandered all round in different chosen sites.

Now you know my home at Paradise inside and out as I hope many will still remember it, even though years and years have come and gone between then and now.

"Such is Time that takes in trust
Our youth, our joys, our all we have."



MY DAD

VII

"One Father is worth more than a hundred schoolmasters."

NOW THAT you have been told a little of the supposed beginning of my Paradise, and have been taken in and around my dear old home, it is only right and fitting that you should know the ones who made that home the very centre of Paradise.

Once again may I remind you that I am not painting a picture of *my* home, of *my* people, because I, and, least of all they, would expect you to consider they especially merit this distinction, but because they are the kind of men and women from similar small beginnings that have pioneered and have made this West of ours what it is. They are real men and women, not storybook ones, and individually and collectively the "salt of the earth."

So please do not be piqued at "I" and "me" and "mine" and "ours." Overlook them where possible and write in "you" and "yours."

My Father was Lowland Scottish.

He was born on a tiny, very poor farm at the edge of the village of Polmont, Stirlingshire, six miles or so from the city of Falkirk.

Regardless of size or importance, every house then, as now, boasted a name instead of a number as a distinguishing mark. My Father's birthplace was "Croy Farm."

In the heather covered hills around from which you could look out to Stirling and Linlithgow and the blue "Ochils," (Morton's blue) were coal mines, some of which

my Father's grandmother had owned before a love affair with the big, handsome coachman ending in marriage led to her disinheritance.

In these same coal mines Harry Lauder, born around there, once worked as a young lad, before his destiny overtook him and changed an uneducated, homely miner with a gift of song and a sense of humor into the contradiction in terms—a Scottish comedian.

Croy Farm was just like any other "wee house 'marig the heather," no better, no worse—a thatched grey stone house.

Inside one big room with an all-purpose open hearth, rough table, benches, chairs and dresser.

One piece of furniture looked out of place—a beautiful mahogany grandfather's clock with a hammered brass face where, besides the time of day, you could read the day of the month. This clock had belonged to my father's grandmother, who became the coachman's wife. It is now a prized possession of my eldest son.

For bedrooms, cubby-holes in the walls with built-in box-beds, and beneath them trundle-beds that pulled out at night for the children.

Just the kind of farm house inside and out that Robbie Burns has made familiar and lovable to us all.

At the age of twelve, as was usual for lads who were not to be farmers, my Dad was apprenticed in the trade he wished to learn. His contract was with a dress goods and millinery firm in Falkirk.

He would leave home at daybreak well fortified with porridge and scones, washed down with buttermilk, and walk the six miles into the city to get the store swept and cleaned before opening.

During the day he had all sorts of jobs—anything that had to be done except wait on customers. He rearranged stock that had been upset in making a sale; he delivered sales in all sorts of weather and of course on foot.

We liked to listen to his stories of those days, and we sympathized with him in the hardness of his lot.

One day in pouring rain he was sent out to deliver some hats. Scottish rain is the wettest, most persistent you will find in a day's march. Father thought the delivery could have waited until the rain was over, or had at least let up a bit. But no! Out at once he had to go, smarting under the injustice. To get even, and be sure the hats were as well dampened as he himself was, he held the boxes one by one under a spout where the rain poured off the slate tiles.

He never described the consequences; likely there were plenty, but he had squared the account in advance.

Oatmeal has a habit of being very filling at the time of eating, but disappointing and unsatisfactory in its staying powers.

From his daylight breakfast to his lunch was a comparatively long time.

To fill the hole in his stomach that developed in the interval, the lad was given a penny to spend.

That seems a ridiculously inadequate bit of money, balanced against the appetite and "tummy" capacity of a healthy growing boy of twelve, but it wasn't as bad as it sounds now.

A penny judiciously spent on yesterday's scones and a bit of cheese went a lot farther than we would suppose.

Then my Dad was a steady customer and maybe sometimes rated and received a handout.

He would stand each day at the bakery window, passing in review the goodies displayed there to tempt the passer-by, and sampling in imagination each intriguing bit of pastry, balancing each in turn against a big stale scone and cheese.

Always the result was the same.

Over the counter his penny went.

"Please, give me one strawberry jam tart."

One delicious, airy, sweet bit of fluff, just one delectable, exquisite atom with no ability to fill the aching void in his stomach; but leaving on his tongue a satisfying, heavenly memory.

My Dad was a mighty good provider. Because he had so often gone hungry himself, he could not bear to know any one lacked daily bread, and a bit extra.

At night after the store was closed, back the miles to home, past a little cemetery which in the morning he never looked at. At night to a small twelve-year old it was haunted by unknown terrible things.

He went by on the run.

By the time he had earned the right to have his name in the firm name over the door, he had learned the dress-goods and millinery business backwards and forwards. He knew the principles of merchandising; how and when and where to buy; how and when and where to sell.

When he was twenty he heard in his ears a siren's song — "Westward, young man, go Westward!"

He heard and listened and answered the call.

Without more ado he up and left — all his worldly possessions in a brass nail-studded leather-covered trunk on whose lock cover is stamped a crown and beneath it V.R. I have it yet.

Victoria Regina!

Locks must have shared with window panes the privilege and honor of paying a tax to the Crown to help pay the cost of keeping up the kingdom.

A steerage passage on a boat leaving Glasgow, February 28th, 1873, bound for Canada, and a new immigrant was on the way to the calling West.

"Qu'Appelle!" What a glorious name for a fort, a trading post in the heart of the northwest, for a western town in Canada!

Who calls? What is calling?

Everything is calling, everything to which the mind and

heart can turn a listening ear — mystery, adventure, ambition — the three freedoms we hear so much of today. Freedom to live, to speak, to worship each in his own way; life and love and liberty are calling; every mountain and plain, every river and lake, every wind that blows, every star in the moonlit sky called, still calls to all who have "a listening ear and an understanding heart," and can find an echo within themselves.

I like "Qu'Appelle."

Like all Scottish people my Dad loved his native land with a deep, almost painful love. Songs of Scotland made him quiet and withdrawn. He would not let his feelings creep to the surface. He looked forward to going back occasionally; he did only twice, just as a sedative to his nostalgia, but he loved Canada in quite a different way.

He never felt he wanted to go back to live in Scotland. Not because life had been difficult there, but because he loved the freedom, the windsweptness of the prairies. There were more opportunities at hand for achieving a certain amount of success in any chosen field granting a willingness to work ungrudgingly at it. He may have been proved wrong by events, but never once in the hard times that shared the years with the good, did he ever lose faith in the ability of the west to ultimately weather the storm.

Arrived in Canada he went directly to Toronto and found a position with a firm in the same kind of business as he had left in Scotland.

Before long, however, he decided he was through working for someone else. He wanted to be his own boss.

With a brother Scot who eventually became his brother-in-law, he went to Paris, Ontario, and together they opened up a millinery and dress goods store.

That was good enough for a year to two.

Then an irresistible impulse to see home again (Scotland is always *home* to any Scot, wherever he may live) sent him back over the ocean in July, 1879.

His young only brother, William, was apprenticed to a firm in Falkirk just as he had been.

After a bit of persuasion by my Dad, Uncle Bill was released from his contract and within the month they were both on the way back to their adopted land — Canada.

My Dad's persuasion likely amounted to "If you don't or won't let my brother go, he'll go anyway."

Once he was going home from Winnipeg in a roundabout way by "mixed," because there wasn't a train to Paradise for a couple of days.

When the conductor picked up his ticket, Father confided in him that he wanted off at a certain station where a horse and buggy was awaiting him.

The conductor, surprised at the audacity of anyone presuming to ask a train to be stopped when he wasn't scheduled to stop it, told him firmly and definitely it couldn't be done.

My Dad insisted.

"Either you slow this train up enough going through the village so that I can jump off, or I'll pull the emergency cord. You'll *have* to stop to see what is wrong, and there *will* be something wrong."

The conductor saw the light. The train slowed up enough for my Dad to jump clear.

Another time when he boarded the train, this time in the sleeping car, some one else was comfortably established in his section and was disinclined to the point of rudeness, to be moved. The three-cornered argument was proving interesting and entertaining to the other passengers.

Father insisted on his rights; the other men insisted some other seat would do him, and the sleeping-car conductor, possibly well tipped, sided with them.

Finally he announced he would go and call the train conductor.

That was pie.

Intentionally loud enough for the car to hear, my Dad

called after his retreating uniform, "Bring the engineer and fireman too. You'll need them."

He got his own section.

A different approach on the part of the passengers and my Dad would not have insisted, but he wasn't going to be bullied, and he knew his rights.

Be phased by circumstances? Not he.

In Paris the brothers worked along together in the business, and it seemed as if this was permanent now.

But something happened to upset the calculations.

His partner married, and my Dad wanted to do the same.

The business, though now well established, didn't seem to promise a good enough living for two, possibly three families.

Once more the West, the far Northwest was calling.

My Dad sold out to his partner and in the spring of 1881 he and his brother went off to the land where opportunity wasn't just tapping at the door. It seemed to seriously threaten to break it in.

For some reason Winnipeg wasn't just what he wanted.

It was already well rooted.

He wanted a place in the making, whose beginnings he could share.

He did take time to look over possible chances in Winnipeg, but nothing clicked, so on they went to Paradise, then even without a railroad.

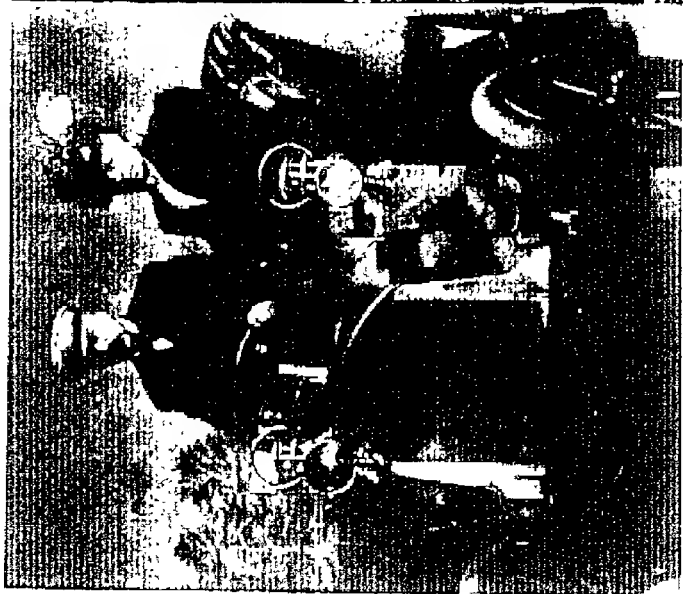
An error all around if you will, but who can look so far ahead and always guess right?

A throw of the dice; a straw in the wind can make or mar a future.

Father was tall, over six feet, well built and fair.

He wore a short moustache and a trimmed beard.

Funny thing about that beard. He certainly didn't wear one when he first came to Canada a lad of twenty. I'm not sure about Paris, but when he arrived in Paradise where



Taken at Los Angeles, the only picture of my father without a beard — Isn't mother's "peach basket" chic?



History Makers (in Paradise)

men were men and they all wore whiskers, he fell in line. It may have been a lack of barbers, or economy; it may have been for convenience or for protection from sun and wind and frost, but the style was to approach as nearly as possible to the "House of David" fashion of today. Beards were long and bushy, and moustaches completely covered the lips. Perhaps Mother had something to do with my Dad stopping short of the limit. His lips were free. He trimmed his side whiskers but allowed a little more range to his beard. It was fairly long and trimmed as square across the bottom as if the barber had used a level. Beards gradually went out except for very old men. Year by year the barber snipped and clipped until all my Dad had left of his former facial glory was a very short trim Van Dyke.

Have you ever been in a western town that is getting ready months ahead to stage an old-time celebration? You'd be surprised at the young gorillas that fill your gas tank and wipe your windshield. I don't know how they ever pacify a wife or hold a sweetheart.

Only once did Dad go so far as to part with his whiskers altogether.

He was going away on a trip for six weeks across the line, and presumably wanted to look smart. When he came back among friends, Nature had been kind enough to cover up again the deep dimple in his chin and return him to the status quo of Van Dyke.

He never repeated.

An immaculate fastidious dresser, no spots, no holes, no missing buttons were tolerated. His boots, rain or shine, must be polished every morning in the old country custom—anything rather than dirty, run-down boots.

He claimed he would rather go with the seat out of his pants than wear shabby unpolished boots. Likely an exaggeration. Hope so.

Once when we had a little foreign maid, she tried to help out with this daily ritual of boot blacking. She put a polish

on Dad's boots like a nigger's heel, one morning. The only trouble was that she had used lead stove polish instead of boot polish, and the boots that should have been jet black were a soft, dull gunmetal.

He was typically old country in his preference for tweeds, salt and pepper mixtures, rough or smooth.

Always a light shirt — white for Sunday — with a starched separate white collar and a bow tie, made to order by the dozen for him. Stock ones were skimpy. His pet piece of wearing apparel was a starched, white pique vest with pearl buttons. No pullover sweaters, no mackinaws, no overalls.

He was hardheaded and softhearted. Made no claim to being religious, but he *was* deep down. Only illness or absence from home could have kept him away from church on Sunday.

He liked a thoughtful sermon and good congregational singing of old-fashioned psalms and hymns, and a simple anthem not beyond the abilities of the choir. Best of all he liked to hear my Mother, who was choir leader, sing a solo "The Holy City," "The Lost Chord," "Flee as a Bird to Your Saviour," while the collection plate passed up and down the pews.

No one ever saw my Dad sleep in church, but for years I slept through the sermons, my head on his knee, and my hand in his.

There was one notable exception to this weekly morning and evening routine, and it was a long one.

The minister in charge of our little log church made the big mistake of telling my Father what he should and should not do in a matter of personal action. He didn't know him very well, or he would never have been so rashly foolish.

Led maybe, driven never.

For over two years the Church and my Father were strangers.

That was why I was old enough to protest loudly and with no letup when another minister was conferring on me with all attendant ceremony in our front parlor my given name, Margaret. Holding tightly to my Father's hand, I insisted aimlessly and uselessly to the end, "I don't want to be baptised."

I never earned "Margaret" until I went away to school in my early teens and had to sign the register. It is still there I suppose — "Margret," (I forgot the "a" — partly from nervousness, partly because I had never so signed before and wasn't quite sure.) The second year I had advanced so far that even "Margaret" wasn't good enough, not quite to my taste, and all my examination papers were signed "Marguerite," (French, I hope) and a good calling down was mine as a result.

Sometimes we learn too fast.

We used to think privately at home that my Father missed his calling. He would have made a marvelous detective, a second Sherlock Holmes. Things he wasn't expected to, wasn't wanted to see and hear, that he wasn't even trying to, came naturally to his notice in home and store in a positively uncanny way.

Because he had had little opportunity for education and often felt keenly the need of it, it was one thing he was strong for. When he was on the school board, any pupil expelled for discipline found the way open to return after some days of exile if my Father could arrange it.

Like all Scots, he was proud. The Scottish have so much to be proud of, their native land, their traditions and history. A man with no pride in his country, his ancestry, his family or his friends, has no pride worth-while in himself.

Sometimes this family pride has a bit of a quirk and leads to complications.

One day coming home from the store, Dad found me playing around in what seemed a new tweed coat. In the kitchen he asked Mother where she had got my new coat.

This was the first experience of the kind so Mother readily explained that Aunt Bessie (his former partner's wife) had sent it out as her youngster, my cousin, had outgrown it and it was still quite new. Dad's pride was up in arms with a bang.

"Roll it up and send it back to her, first train, and tell them in the East I can clothe my own children without any of their castoffs."

Mother likely passed the word east, but more than likely the offending coat became the property of some little Indian child.

No more hand-me-downs ever came west.

Ambitious for himself and for us — a hard, exacting taskmaster, but just, a generous friend in need, quick to anger and positively blighting when he was good and mad.

In this connection I wish to tell two stories and one of them is on me.

Dad had a favorite pony — little black Nell. One day he lent her not "to a lady to ride a mile away," but to the banker who had to make a trip to the railhead, thirty-five miles or more away.

He rode her too fast and too far.

She bogged down in one of the many sloughs on the road.

No amount of pulling on her bridle, no amount of beating would make her move.

She was all in and it looked hopeless.

In desperation, rather than leave her living, an easy prey to the wolves, quite sure she could never work her way out, the fellow tried to cut her throat with his pocket-knife.

It wasn't much of a knife; it wasn't much of a job.

He went on, and little black Nell, left alone to her fate, lay and rested until she felt strong enough to pull herself free and struggle out.

Leisurely eating and drinking, she made her way back to her familiar stall in our stable at Paradise.

Everyone who loves animals — and their name is legion — anyone who knows what horses and dogs too, meant in those lonely, stunted pioneer days — loyal, long-suffering friends and companions who shared bad days and good, demanding nothing, asking little, can understand my Father's blinding rage as he listened to the man's story of having had to abandon little Nell in a slough with her throat cut. They could even share his black strangling urge to cut the fellow's own throat, or at least smash his face.

He did neither of course, but I think he could have done either. He was physically able, and as to temper at such times — well, the least said the better.

Very seldom was Father's anger directed against my sister or me — which may have been due to good management on our part, more likely to consideration on Mother's part.

I don't remember this incident — I'm glad I don't — but the tale was very familiar in all its details.

It was Saturday night — the end of a long week, and the end of a long hard day from seven or so in the morning until the door closed on the last customer at night, possibly eleven. Then the day's receipts had to be checked and counted.

I had had my bath in front of the kitchen stove. My hair was braided in preparation for the swank of wavy hair on Sunday.

Do you remember in "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch," how the children's hair was braided while wet, and pressed dry into kinks with a hot flat iron if they were in a hurry?

I suppose I was tired and cranky. I complained that the braids were too tight, that they pinched the little hairs on the back of my neck.

Mother was unimpressed — so I tried something else.

I waxed vocal. I cried and screamed — a harsh hard tempered cry.

Knowing Father was about due, Mother tried to shut me up.

No go. I was bent of being pampered. I howled on.

I could easily have loosened the braids myself, but I wanted Mother to give in and do it.

No chance. She wouldn't.

I wouldn't shut up. I craved attention, and oh boy! did I get it, and not on the back of my neck!

Father heard my yells before he was halfway home; they had great carrying possibilities. He stamped in the front door and before he was one step up the stairs on his way to Mother's room where I was, I realized instantly that it wasn't attention I craved at all. I wished for nothing but a complete, absolute oblivion, a blackout, if I had known the word.

Life is still like that.

You wish desperately for something, bend every energy to getting it, and suddenly you have it and it's the last thing in the world you really wish.

My first persistent hankering for attention was realized to the full, and at least to my Father's satisfaction.

I had every excuse to cry then, not a loud tempered cry, but a soft whimpering cry for a hurt, inside and out. Likely I was too scared to risk any further publicity, lay still, my head covered to muffle the sobs, my heart bursting with resentment and wishing I had never been born.

After things had simmered down, I know my Dad's heart was as sore as mine.

He was like that.

As far as I know, that was the only real thrashing I ever had, and it was just hearsay--not a real memory.

Being, as I have confessed, no "Elsie Dinsmore," I'm sure I earned and deserved dozens more. We could and would argue with Mother as all children do, but one word, even just one look from Father, was more than enough.

Gardening was his hobby.

We had a very large vegetable garden where he spent most of his evenings.

His must be the first radishes, peas, beans, potatoes or corn, to brag to old Joe Mac about. He robbed the hills for the new potatoes, digging in the soft earth with his fingers, feeling around for the largest potatoes, pulling them off and disturbing the parent stalk not at all.

He had a standing challenge with old Joe, and certain dates that were deadlines for particular first vegetables. When he could take them down to the store fully developed, "choice" and "prime," the winner by a day, his pleasure was definite.

He lost caste in his own eyes if Joe beat him to it.

He earned every bit of credit too, lugging great endless pails full of water up the slippery bank from the river for us children to dribble along the thirsty rows.

He hoed between the rows which we weeded on hands and knees. He raked everything neat and clean.

First thing every morning in spring before going to the store, he would be out probing around drooping plants for the guilty cutworm, or tickling the cracking earth along the rows to help ambitious seeds break through a little quicker. He loved to watch growing things, and the harvest was sufficient recompense for all his backaches.

Curling was his winter pastime and recreation.

One of my prized possessions is "The President's Trophy," 1897. I watched that final game from start to finish in preference to skating, and at the last end ran home alone to be the first one to take the good news to Mother. I don't think she was very interested, but it couldn't have meant more to me had it been a Dominion championship.

In politics a Liberal, not because his father was (he wasn't) but because he did his own thinking, and the tenets of Liberalism were his.

His father was a rabid, or shall I say staunch, Conserva-

tive. He himself had left Scotland too young to have had any part in politics.

The second time he went home there was an election coming up, and hot arguments were the order of the day. My grandfather stayed up late enough at night to put up his party posters. My Dad got up early to tear them down and replace them with the opposition's placards.

There was never a question in Paradise as to which side of politics you favored. There was no alternative other than Grit or Tory, and you proclaimed your adherence to either side loudly on every street corner when there was an election in the air. No such thing as believing your particular leanings were your own private concern; no such thing as straddling the fence.

At school every youngster was just as violently and bitterly partisan as his or her father. As yet, of course, women had no vote.

Naturally we didn't know a thing about single planks or whole platforms, but that didn't prove a thing or dampen our ardor as we ran along with the torchlight processions election night if we were lucky enough to be on the winning side.

Those were no conventional mildly indifferent parades led by a band that would have played just as cheerfully for the other side if they had won. They were escape valves for a frenzied jubilation that otherwise would have blown a few heads off.

My Dad never sought office, but many an office sought him.

Truly he was "of that larger family of pioneers whose hearts and lives have been so closely knit by the early years of hardships and trial through which all passed together. In the press of personal business interests, you have always given place to the wider duties of citizenship, given freely of your time and talents to your town and country."

There are no friends like the old and tried.



This is an enlargement of a snap and I like it best of all the pictures of my father.

Those days are very far away now, but sometime, somewhere, I should like to lay my head again on my Dad's knee and have him smooth my hair until I slept; I should like to slip my hand in his, and half-running to keep up by his side, go down the path — home.

We used to sing little hymns in Sunday school about the "Sweet By and By," sing them lustily, cheerfully and unthinkingly.

"By and By" is so easily said, but that "Beautiful Shore" seems very dim and far.

"Good Bye Papa! Be sure to wait for me at noon."

"The gentle mind by gentle deeds is known,
For a man by nothing is so well bewrayed as by his manners."

VIII

"Over my head in the days that have flown,
"No love like Mother-love ever has shone;
No other worship abides and endures,
Faithful, unselfish and patient like yours."

MY MOTHER! How shall I write of my Mother so that you may have a clear picture, not a picture all dimmed and blurred by my love and my memories?

For two reasons I must not let my heart dictate my words, if I can help it.

First, because, being Scottish myself, if only by descent, that which I feel most I hide deepest, at least in speaking. Writing is different.

Secondly, because if I gave you the impression that my Mother missed a great deal of what life owed her, I haven't told her story right. As with most people, gifts given to her with one hand were sometimes snatched away with the other. But taken as a whole, she enjoyed life, bitter and sweet, to the full, and she gave back to life with lavish generosity.

My Mother was born of Scottish parentage in Paris, Ontario — one of a family of five boys and five girls.

They were all musical, all entertainers in one way or another, playing different instruments, singing, reciting, burlesquing.

Their home was a rendezvous for the young people of the town who were always sure of a good jolly time and lots to eat. Young people ask little more.



My Mother

Newcomers were invited as soon as favorably passed on, and so the two Scotties, the two chaps who had just opened up a new store, followed the crowd.

As was right in a family as large as theirs, the work was divided. The two elder girls took turns in the kitchen preparing and serving the meals.

Fate decreed that the first time that my prospective father came to supper, my likewise prospective mother was on duty in the kitchen.

Kitchen doors have keyholes for just such emergencies. Mother gave father the once or twice over from the keyhole.

She thought him awfully good-looking, but shy. She liked him at once, and he liked her when she wandered in later, after the dishes were washed and the kitchen cleaned up.

She had on her best bib and tucker, and looked as if she knew nothing about pots and pans.

The two Scotties had met their future wives.

I'm afraid my Mother was a clip, if you know what I mean, and she never quite outgrew her propensities for having fun.

At the time when my Father came into the picture, there was another young chap who was trying to get a stand-in with Mother. She didn't like him and none of her sisters did.

How to get rid of him without actually shutting the door in his face was another thing.

Ordinary gentle hints were no good. He had to be hit on the head with a hammer, or dealt with in a similar rough way.

My Mother worked it out, if not very kindly, at least very ingeniously.

On Saturday morning, according to previous arrangement, the fellow drove up to their home, all spic and span—himself, the horse, the buggy.

They were to drive to Galt, one of the nearer towns, and spend the day there.

Mother was ready. The zero hour for her would-be beau had struck.

She had made a "scrummy" fresh gingerbread, of which he was particularly fond. When putting in the ginger and other spices, she had tossed in a generous dash of jalop.

Just in case you don't know what jalop is, I'll spare you the trouble of looking it up in the dictionary and tell you that "jalop is the root of a plant found in Mexico. It has little or no taste and no smell, but it is (or was) much used in powder form as a cathartic," and you know what that is.

It was a good-looking, good-tasting gingerbread.

The young man enthusiastically accepted a large helping, and decided it was "more-ish." Mother obliged. Not a scruple, not one twinge of conscience!

Then they started in state for the neighboring town.

You must remember it wasn't like today when every mile or so along the highways there is a gas station with a sideline — "Ladies' Rest Room" here, and "Men's" there, "Dames" and "Messieurs," "Senors" and "Senoras," even "Jiggs" and "Maggie," "He" and "She," if that garage wanted to be different and the garage man was facetious.

Such a sideline is as much standard equipment as the red, white or green gas pumps. You get tired reading along the road that "Mac's Comfort Station" is all modern or registered or officially approved. You get fed up seeing the road signs, the big billboards with the picture of the prim bespectacled woman dragging a young roughneck boy into "Ladies" while he pulls that other way to "Men."

It's monotonous and tiresome, but never embarrassing—not nowadays. We have passed that stage.

Mile after mile passed slowly, Mother and the chap each busy with their own thoughts — Mother's, "How soon?" his, "How long?"

No help in sight for the distracted suitor, whose appetite had been his undoing.

Conversation lagged. Mother didn't want to be bothered, and he couldn't concentrate on talking.

I'll spare you the gruesome details, but they didn't get to Galt.

I don't think he ever suspected Mother and the delicious gingerbread, but "something that he had eaten" had certainly disagreed with him.

He was on the spot. Mother's problem was solved. Never did he recover from his terrible humiliation sufficiently to call on her again.

It was a family joke for a long time and, though efficacious, I wouldn't advocate its use except under extreme necessity.

The way was open and all clear sailing for my Dad.

He left, as I have said, for the West in the spring of 1881, and in September, 1882, went back to Paris for my Mother.

They drove in state from Portage la Prairie.

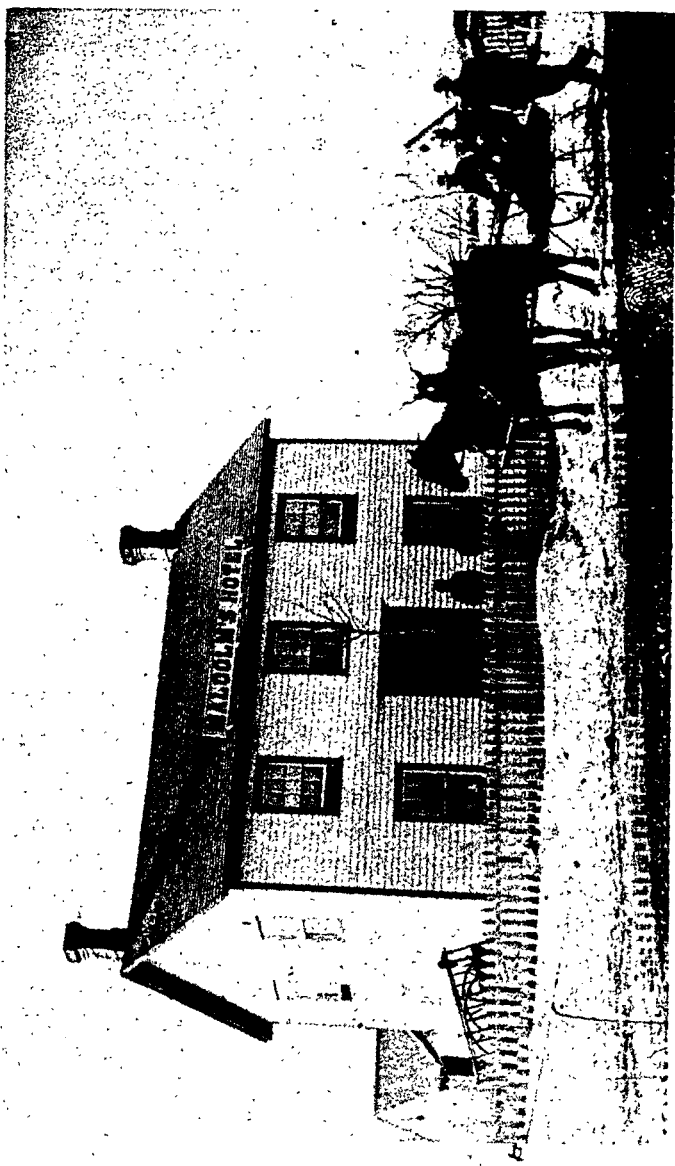
The "Windsor House" which had been "Malcolm's Hotel" was where my Dad was living, and here my Mother spent her first winter.

The memory of the tall, angular, kindly Irish woman who, with her husband Old Joe, owned and ran this frontier boarding house, this woman with the proverbial "gift of gab" and keen sense of humor of the Irish, and to the highest degree their impulsive generosity and warm-heartedness, is still a green and living memory to all who once were within her sphere of influence.

Vale! Old-timer!

They say a choice of colors in clothes has some inner significance. Dashing personalities like the brighter deeper colors of reds and blues, greens and orange. People more reserved and sensitive prefer the less boisterous pastels.

Certainly color has a definite psychic effect.



The first hotel or stopping place was Malcolme's Hotel, built in 1876. Later the Windsor House. My Dad standing by the cutter. Note Red River cart inside the fence.

If you are a bit down and want to perk up, it helps to add a dash of color to your outfit — a flower, a ribbon, a handkerchief. If you are feeling up in the clouds, gay and lighthearted, your choice of dress wouldn't be black. Associated with mourning, it is depressing, devitalizing, even if smart.

People who like and wear a great deal of white are perennially young in heart.

My Mother was one of those who liked and wore white often, and certainly she was always young in spirit and at heart. Just as white starched pique vests were my Father's specialty, aprons were my Mothers — aprons that *were* aprons. They went three quarters around and right down to the hem of the skirt they were worn to protect. No dinky little useless bits of cambric and lace, tiny bib above the waist and fig-leaf size below, but sensible colored gingham for morning, and white cotton for afternoon that sometimes were conceded a few tucks, or a row of embroidery inset or on the edge — the same as decorated our best cotton drawers.

She had a good sense of humor and could be trusted to see the funny side, if there were one, where my Dad was blind. His quiet seriousness, his total inability to see any thing to laugh at on such occasions only added fuel to the flame of my Mother's merriment.

Too many grownups seem to forget they were ever children. They cease to understand and appreciate children's reactions.

Not my Mother — and children loved her.

Once when my first young hopeful and I were over at Paradise for a visit, I was busy in what had been the hired girl's room over the kitchen, now a sewing room. My small son was playing downstairs with a big rubber ball, while Mother worked around and Father sat reading and smoking in his chair by the window.

Mother took an odd hand in the ball game. So did

Father. The bounces and throws became more and more uncontrolled and wilder. Bud was having a great time, laughing excitedly and running around retrieving from behind the stove, under the table, out of the cupboard.

Suddenly complete silence.

I called down to ask what had happened.

Controlling her laughter with difficulty, Mother called back, "Bud just made a bull's-eye."

The ball had landed squarely in Father's spittoon, and his usual "I don't see anything to laugh at in that," sent Mother flying upstairs to find in me a kindred spirit who did see something funny in the contretemps.

Mother, without a sound, went through the whole sequence of the game and its sudden end, in pantomime, mimicking my Father's long face — just as my sister and I used to do when we peeked through the crack of the double doors in the parlor at company.

We laughed until our sides ached.

That kind of a laugh shakes your liver up and does you good all over. There is no recipe like it and it's a gift if you can laugh like that.

"There's health and goodness in the mirth
In which an honest laugh has birth."

Many years later, when Dad and Mother were getting ready to leave Oak Villa and Paradise, Mother was clearing the medicine shelf in the pantry of the accumulations of years.

She didn't like to leave any medicines in the bottles she threw out, so bottle after bottle was emptied into a pail, a seething ominous brew — a "mistura infernum."

There was a box of ampules of serum, and she thought she would try an ordeal by fire on them. No fun just dropping them in the pail as they were!

Off with the lid of the stove where a good fire burned, and in with one capsule!

It exploded with quite a satisfactory bang.

That was only one, however, and there was a boxful.

In went three at once.

The result was a bit unexpected, just a bit overdone. It was catastrophic. With a rat-tat-tat like the beginning of a First of July celebration, away went a corner of the stove.

Had there been anyone around to have shared the fun, I wouldn't have put it past Mother to have dumped the rest of the box in, and the stove would have been only a memory. She couldn't take it to Winnipeg anyway.

It's like playing any game alone. What's the use? No one to applaud your good shots, none to sympathize with you over the bad ones.

It almost justifies the fellow who committed suicide when he caught himself cheating at solitaire.

Grownups are really just big children.

My sister's children and mine loved to go to visit in Paradise for weeks on end; never seemed to be in a hurry to get home again; never seemed to miss us.

Once our Jack had been with Mother and Dad so long that I was almost a stranger to him. When I went to get him at Winnipeg, halfway house from Paradise, he was more than usually quiet and shy. He had nothing to say to me at all at first. Then with a big effort at being polite to someone he wasn't just at home with, he looked up seriously and confided, "Mamma, the war is over." That was November, 1918. If only *this* war were too!

My Mother played the piano and she sang beautifully. You don't need to take my word only for that.

Her voice was mezzo-soprano, with a range, a fullness and sweetness that vibrated all your heart strings.

In spite of her own lightheartedness, the songs she liked best herself and sang best were not the gay ones.

They were the ones that are coming back again into popular favor now because their appeal is not of today, not of yesterday, not of east, west, north or south, but of all

time and every place. The music and the words have a simple, choking, haunting appeal, and an honest, not mawkish, emotionalism that even the least susceptible cannot escape. They will still be loved and sung when yodeling, blues, and torch singing, swing music and jazz have met the fate they deserve.

Many, many hours my Mother must have put in at her beloved piano when she first went to Oak Villa in Paradise, drowning her homesickness, her longing for familiar faces and well-loved voices.

I have two letters written to her by her mother that first year in the West, which I found wrapped up in linen among her treasures. "A photograph or two, some letters tied with blue." The writing is very fine and even; the letter paper is brittle and yellow, and recorded there are the homely little details of daily life, of the comings and goings of brothers and sisters and friends at "Pine Grove Cottage," the hopes for her welfare so far away and alone — the wish to see her.

These two letters may have found my Mother particularly lonely, maybe blue. She kept them near to read and read again.

The things we treasure are often strange. A pressed flower, a battered mug, a ribbon, a certain whiff of perfume, and the flood gates of memory fly wide, but letters most clearly of anything, bring back the writer who has spoken to you there and speaks again each time you read.

Glance down a partial list of my Mother's favorite songs, favorites long after the East had ceased to be home. You can read between the lines.

They say "elephants and women never forget."

"I'll take you home again Kathleen."

"Will ye no come back again?"

"Do they miss me at home?"

"It's oh! but I'm longing for my ain folk."

"When you and I were young Maggie."

"Sing to me the old Scotch songs."

"Come back to Erin."

"Eileen Asthore."

"Last Rose of Summer."

"Jeanie with the light brown hair."

"Forgotten."

"Absent."

"Land of the Leal."

"Song of the Immigrant."

"Rolling Home to Bonnie Scotland."

A very short, incomplete list.

Hearing them again in memory, I can feel again a smother of emotion, can scarcely keep back the tears. I want to lay my head down and cry my heart out.

Why?

Just because.

The church choir was her special task, as were the Christmas tree entertainments.

"The Pirates of Penzance," "Pinafore," and other light operas undertaken by all the musical talent in town were part of her recreation.

No concert program was complete without her songs. Her singing of old Scottish and Irish airs, bringing back as they did dearly loved and well-remembered scenes in their faraway native lands, made the tears well in eyes looking backwards across the ocean, across the years.

None would have been ashamed of them, nor have denied them.

"Encore Mamma! Encore! Encore!"

Some cooks and bakers are natural, some are domestic-school ones.

My Mother was a natural.

Given a recipe, she altered, added to or took from, but always improved it. A dash of this, a pinch of that, a bit more butter, a little less sugar, and the original was made her own special. In fact, she very seldom used recipes

except as a base — a fact that was the despair of friends who wished to know *exactly* what and how much was in some particular goody.

With unexpected company coming or staying on for a meal, she could whisk up a cake, make a pan of tea biscuits or some scones that would have delighted the heart of any miller whose brand of flour she happened to use. All flours were alike to her; she played no favorites.

The perfumes of Araby, the nectar and ambrosia of the gods were in our kitchen at Paradise when my Mother was busy there.

"You labored so faithfully, gave of your talents so freely in the pioneer days for the promotion of all that tended to advance social and community life, but it was your fidelity to the sacred duties of home that testified to your sterling worth of character and made you lovely and deeply beloved."

(Quotation from an address given to Mother when she left Paradise.)

"Hello Mamma, here I am!"

"Mother is the name for God on the lips of little children."

IX

"One ship sails east, another drives west
with the self-same winds that blow,
'Tis the set of the sails and not the gales
that tell them the way to go."

IT IS much more difficult to write about my sister than about my Mother and my Dad. For one reason she dislikes publicity and she is quite unconscious of the fact that I mean to put her on paper. More than likely she won't like it; more than likely she'll give me the lie direct.

It can't be helped. I'm on my way.

Quite certainly I won't show up so well myself, reading again between the lines, yet in the story of those days my sister's story is indissolubly linked up with mine.

We were, we are still utterly different. Given a certain thing to do or say, she would go about it one way, I would go the opposite. Yet perhaps we complement and balance one another. Let us hope so.

It is the set of the sails, the turn of the rudder that determines the course and the behaviour of ships under given conditions.

What sail, what rudder, whatever is it that determines the way two children brought up under exactly similar circumstances and conditions shall act?

The reason lies too deep. It's a poser even to the giant intellect.

Ancestry, prenatal influences, living conditions, home, parents — so many things play a part in deciding what a child shall be when he is born and what he may become.



MY SISTER AND I

And then there is chance, and the old bugbear predestination.

But with all the premises equal and the same, why are we not equal and the same?

It sounds like a problem in geometry.

I'll pass.

One explanation seems only fair here.

This is not my sister as I know her now, maybe not even my sister as she really was then, maybe not as she thinks of herself then or now, but it is my sister as I thought of her when we were children at home in Oak Villa, Paradise.

"Nina" was the name my Mother chose for her first baby.

A book "Nina, or Darkness and Daylight," that she had read, was the reason. She liked the heroine, one of those golden-haired, sweet-faced, trusting 'little goody-goodies that the cruel world is too much for. She was the butt of everything that "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" could muster against her. Then she took ill. She recovered physically, but mentally she is in "darkness" and more gooey than ever.

Mother was young and impressionable.

She wept and sympathized, up hill and down dale, and made up her mind that her first baby girl should be "Nina."

She was.

This used to be a sore point with my sister.

She resented it when I would remind her that she was named after a crazy girl while I was named after mother.

There was just enough difference in our ages and in our likes and dislikes to keep us in diverging paths, each going her own sweet way, as far apart as the poles.

I know she was a much nicer child than I.

I know everyone liked her better than me.

Something mixed up my sails and rudder.

My sister was considerate and thoughtful. If anyone around seemed blue or depressed, off she would trot to

make a cup of tea — a supposed infallible picker-upper. One day she even went so far as to make some biscuits with tea for Mother, and Mother ate them — a much larger assignment.

I was impulsive, and my thoughts were afterthoughts.

She was more conventional than I. Her coat was properly buttoned — mine flapped in the breeze. Her hats and tams sat squarely on her head. My "S.S. Hercules" to her "S. S. Hermione" just barely stuck on the back of my head, more often hung down on my neck by the elastic. She cleaned her teeth and her fingernails because it was the proper thing to do. I'm quite sure I only made passes at my fingers and teeth because I had to. My hair was poor and thin, nondescript in color, and I didn't care. Hers was smooth, shining, luxurious and long, and she was terribly proud of it.

Once after an illness she had to have it cut short as a last alternative to losing it gradually. You would have thought there was a death in the family. Mother washed it carefully and braided it to wave it, and Nina had her photo taken with it hanging all around her face and down her back like one of the Seven Sutherland sisters. Her face is in profile; she is looking back at you to watch your reaction to her crowning glory, displayed to the best advantage. I'm surprised that her face showed at all since her face would be there for another photo and it was the last appearance of her hair. A straight back view would have shown more hair, but then any one, even I, could have said it was my hair. Once more Mother washed and braided it carefully — this for the last time. Oh, those last times! Then one by one the braids were laid tenderly on the table while Nina cried and cried, and I stood by.

Believe it or not, I wasn't jealous or envious of my sister's hair. It was too much bother.

One heavenly summer on the first morning of holidays, I finally wore down Mother's resistance to the point where it

Taken on one of the Winnipeg trips with my dad.



NINA'S PICTURE

The photographer only had one branch, presumably picked off the bouquet at the side.



MY SISTER AND I AT FIVE AND SEVEN YEARS

My sister's top-knot is rather more becoming than the up-sweep
I'm modeling.

vanished, and I rushed off breathlessly to the town barber shop and ordered, "Cut it all off, short like a boy's." No time for me to braid it and so have a souvenir for the future. It scattered on the floor and mingled with that of all the other little toughs, mostly boys, since girls didn't go in for shorn heads. When your hair was cut short, it almost implied you couldn't keep your head clean, that it was pedicular. (Look that one up in Webster if you care to.)

I ran home plastered with hair oil, and in a seventh heaven.

Nina wasn't as hardy as I, was subject to colds and sore throat. She was allowed to stay home from school sometimes and was given a lot of consideration that I didn't get — sort of teacher's pet at home. All ridiculous nonsense of course, all just plain hallucinations of the green-eyed monster.

She was much more even-tempered than I, who unfortunately saw red with very small provocation, much like little "Iodine" in the comic strip, "They'll do it every time."

Deny it though she may, and likely will, she was an ungodly tease, and knowing well my weaknesses could in no time flat have me almost frothing at the mouth with temper. Then she would stand back out of reach of my clutching hands that longed to tear her limb from limb. point her finger at me, and if she said anything at all it was something like, "Ah, Ha! Missy." Nothing really to go and tell Mother about.

Three times at least that I remember now she was out-guessed by little Iodine.

Out of reach? Yes, but not out of range.

Once I made contact with a good solid hairbrush which had often been used on other occasions for more than hair-brushing, hammering nails, etc., or did you guess?

The second time, we were dressing beside the stove in Mother's room. Something started us off in the usual way,

both true to form. When there are only two there isn't much latitude for quarrels. Suddenly, with no volition on my part, (well, hardly any) the hot poker from the lid of the roaring stove was in my hand, but only momentarily. I let it go in my sister's direction with all my heart and soul in the operation. It caught her smack on her bare neck. Naturally it hurt, and it burnt, and naturally she yelled at the top of her lungs for Mother. I deserved what I probably got, but I'm telling you that it didn't hurt or burn nearly as much, her yells weren't nearly as loud as if I had been able to heave the whole red hot stove at her, as I would have liked.

The spirit was willing, but the flesh weak.

I had a small box camera with plates. Each time you clicked the shutter you opened the back of the camera, pulled out a long black rubber sleeve with an elastic cuff, put in your hand, and moved the front plate to the back. We developed the plates and printed the pictures ourselves, sitting tensely in the kitchen or a bedroom, taken over for the session. We excitedly watched shadows break through the plates or prints in solution, identifying this person, that scene.

Then out to the pump to wash the negatives.

Soon I tired of the clumsy, inconvenient plate camera. I had to have an Eastman Kodak with films that as soon as developed and dried, curled up into tight little rolls.

One day I was working alone at the pump washing prints and film negatives, when my sister appeared, and in one of her familiar teasing moods.

To look at her now you would never believe she had ever been capable of such misdirected humor.

While I bent over the hand-basin swishing things around, she would appear to be interested too, and then suddenly would scoop up a handful of water and throw it playfully in my face; or getting behind me while I was in a

vulnerable position, a well-directed knee would almost send me sprawling.

My short-grained temper broke its bonds.

Up came the whole basinful of water and films and prints, and she laughed on the other side of her face, as "Rowdy" did when he went pig-baiting too often.

Looking back it almost seems as if we might have been born too soon. When the Mack Sennett pie-throwing comedies became popular, it is feasible to suppose that we might have starred as a team, with me pitching and my sister receiving. But maybe my sister wouldn't sign up.

She read a great deal when I thought she should have been weeding the garden, raking up the leaves or cutting the grass with me. I didn't care much for reading — it took too much sitting still, and I did like the outside work.

She made beautiful dolls' clothing, with neat even little stitches. My poor children were lucky to have dresses, coats, shirts all of one pattern — just holes for head and arms, and a rough biased square instead of panties.

There is little poetic justice or compensation in the fact that when we grew up she had lost the art or knack of sewing, or maybe decided it wasn't worthwhile. It wasn't. I developed some dexterity in making-down, making-up, and making-over.

My sister wasn't interested in seeing how high a tree she could climb, how far she could see from the platform of the C.P.R. water-tank windmill, how black burnt corks would make her face and hands, how far she could wade into the river. She never learned to swim, nor ride horse-back. She didn't *choose* to swim or ride, but she did ride a bicycle, and she skated well.

She had no curiosity whatever about what was inside a fat mouse or a snake, nor cared to find out how a toad acted and how long it could live if you held it with a stick and sprinkled salt on its back. She didn't try to count the

number of times she could slide across new rubbery ice without getting her feet wet.

In fact, I don't know how she managed to put in her time.

We both took music lessons as most youngsters did if there was a piano or organ in the house. It must have stretched my mother's patience to the breaking point trying to get us to practice a reasonable amount. I once read of a Mother who confessed that the best purgative, regulator, or whatever you choose to call it, that her children ever had, was an order to go and practice. I'll bet that goes for many a youthful pianist.

Usually we slipped through with the minimum, but when there was a recital coming up, the duets and instrumental solos were plain unadulterated drudgery. And on the night of nights, as sick and cold with nervousness we stumbled and blundered through our numbers, it wasn't just drudgery, it was honest-to-goodness Hades.

All differences and quarrels of the day, however, were forgotten and forgiven when we climbed into bed at night after undressing; in winter, one on each side of our puffing, panting, little heater.

Lying snug and cosy in bed, munching an apple, watching the flames flickering through the open damper of the stove was like enjoying the luxury of an open fireplace.

We would listen to the squirrels scampering around over our heads in the space between ceiling and roof where all fall they had carried and piled acorns for the emergencies of winter. We'd hear the whistle of the wind, and the occasional pistol shot crack of a tree whose resistance wasn't equal to the frost. We'd snuggle down deeper in the woolly warmth of the blankets at the sound of the coyotes' sharp staccato bark and blood-chilling howl that started all the dogs in town on a bedlam of response.

If it were spring we listened to the patter of rain on the window panes while we talked and talked; complained and confided and laid plans for the coming day.

We were at peace with the world and with each other as we settled down to sleep.

"Good night, sister. Hope to see each other in the morning."

"We live as much in all that we have lost
as what we own."

X

"I like the people who keep shops. Busy, cheerful folks, with friendly faces."

MY FATHER owned a general store, and in that respect I have it all over my children whose Father is merely a professional man.

What is there in the office, the sanctum sanctorum of a doctor's office but instruments and machines, mysterious and suggestive perhaps, but better left alone? What child would run cheerfully, voluntarily to a doctor's place of business, and I mean business, for pleasure?

But to have the fun of a real old-fashioned general store, in it almost everything from a needle to an anchor, every clerk and errand boy an old friend or the son of an old friend. Boy! That's something!

When I say my Dad owned a general store I don't mean that as it sounds.

It was a firm.

My Father's only brother, whom he had wangled back to Canada from his first trip home to Scotland, was the other member, the other half of the firm.

He lived with us until he was married, even afterwards, until the house he built beside us was ready.

Uncle Bill was quite unlike my fair-skinned, brown-haired Father.

His hair was thick, wavy, and coal black, and his complexion was swarthy.

Before he was long in Paradise he became so tanned by sun and wind that with the head start he had he was often.

mistaken for a half-breed. The mistake was easily understood. He picked up the Indian language at once, and could carry on a conversation with a few signs thrown in, with any of the natives as he dickered for furs, for fish, for cattle or labor.

He was lighthearted and cheery, whistling and singing or doing a few steps of the Red River Jig while he waited for meals.

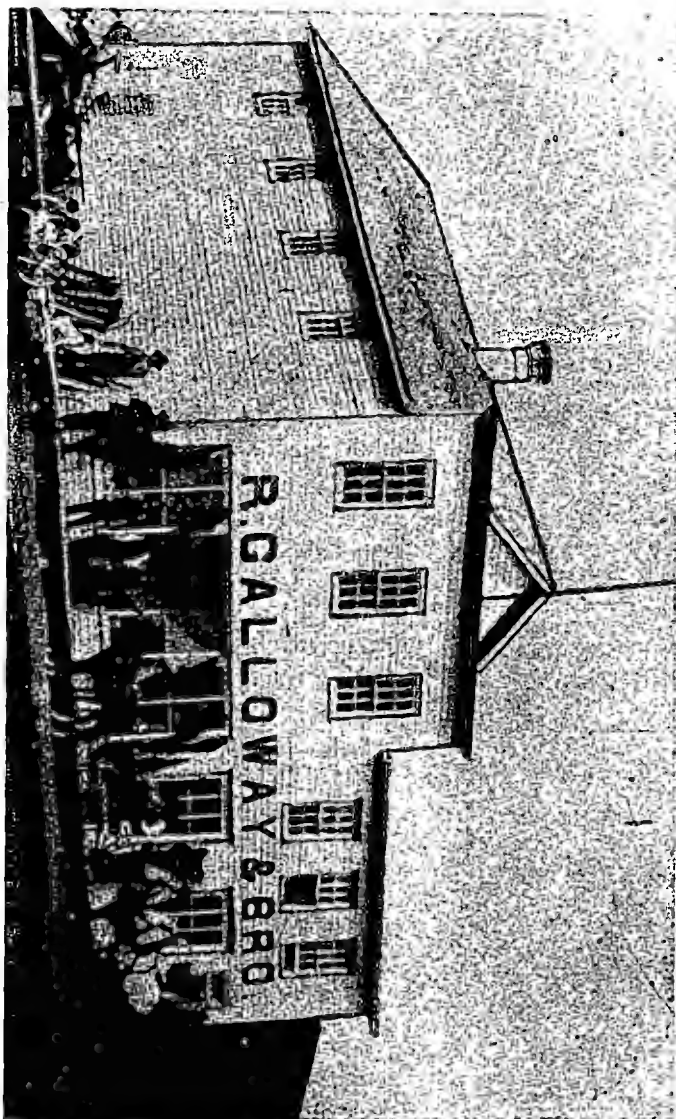
A favorite song was "O! for a thousand tongues to sing," and when the words ran out he could "ad lib" indefinitely. Once when he was undergoing a serious operation he got going well on this theme during the initial stages of the anaesthetic. But his tongue had lost its cunning. It went all haywire. He longed vocally for a thousands sings to tongue, for a tongue to thousand sing, and the tune kept merging into some other tune. The surgeons put him back on the track several times, then gave it up and threw on more ether.

When our first store was opened in Paradise in the spring of 1881, (and I say "our" again with definite reservations, being still very much of a bubble in the blue, a disembodied thought) there was, you will remember, no railroad. There was just the old Saskatchewan Trail leading on into the far Northwest.

The first stock was shipped from Montréal and Toronto to the end of the rail thirty-five miles away "as the crow flies." There unloaded, it was packed in Red River carts and the two-wheeled axleless, springless contraptions were off on their screeching way over the unfenced prairie, and in anything but a crow's line of flight.

That first store had no pretensions inside or out, but the trade slogan my Father adopted later was decidedly pretentious — "The Live Business House of the West."

The West was a heap big place. It seemed more limitless because of the only ways of travelling from place to place — on horseback, by dog team, prairie schooner, Red



First Store, 1881 to 1886



Our Uncle Will, 1898

River cart, or the old stagecoach. The Indian custom of measuring distances by "sleeps" is picturesque and apt and convenient.

That slogan was an out-cropping of the restless ambition that drove a young Scottish lad to run away to this land of golden promise across the strange Atlantic.

While superlatives are customary and justifiable in business, and usually taken with a dash of salt, my Dad did live to see that small beginning lead to the goal on which he had set his heart.

The money realized by the sale of his partnership in the Paris store melted like the proverbial snowball in Hades.

You see these were the good old boom days when prices far outran values. If you wanted to be in the game at all you had to be a gambler and take a chance. Do someone before they tried to do you.

The stock had to be arranged for. My Dad's former partner was also not overburdened with capital. They solved each other's difficulties by kiting drafts back and forth.

Kiting, according to Webster, is "raising money or sustaining credit by the use of mercantile paper which is worthless."

That was exactly what their mercantile paper was. The drafts that went east and west between my Father and his old partner were absolutely worthless. They promised payment at a future date to each other for something they had never received, and gave it to the wholesale for payment of supplies. By the time the due date had arrived, the money had been raised through sale of stock on hand to exchange for the useless draft. The account was paid—the crisis was passed.

It was all a very simple adequate financial transaction between friends.

If you have come into town to look around and shop a bit, we might as well go inside.

If you are driving, tie up the horses or oxen at the hitching post in front, though if it is very cold you will likely put them in the livery stable to be fed and looked after — at least you will if they are horses. Even the oxen may get the buffalo robes thrown over their backs.

Stamp slowly up the two or three steps to shake surplus snow or mud off your boots, long-legged rubbers or moccasins, and walk in while the little bell over the door gives fair warning to all and sundry that a customer has arrived.

If it's winter you'll want to stand awhile by the tall, big heater with all the square mica windows. Maybe you have come a long way, sitting in the straw on the bottom of the bobsleigh, well covered up with blankets and fur robes, but still thoroughly chilled and cramped.

Untie your cloud or shawl — even men wore them — pull off your big mitts, rub your ears, your nose, your cheeks to restore circulation, and generally thaw out and relax before you begin the important and pleasant business of laying in several weeks of necessities.

The list has been in the making this many a day until a chance into town came around. Maybe it is just your own household list with everyone in the outfit having a hand in it. Maybe there are lists for some of your neighbors who couldn't get in.

I never knew that first store on Saskatchewan Avenue, was never in it to remember until long afterwards, when it was moved bag and baggage into another building on the main street near the river's other crossing. But general stores in those days followed the same plan of getting as much on display as possible without any attempt at dressing up. There it is! Take it or leave it!

Just recently Jack, whose Father was the first settler to arrive in Paradise in 1871 intending to take up land and stay, and who himself was the first white child born there, told me a little story of this first store of my Dad's.

One day when he was about seven or eight years old, he



Group of Galloway Bros. Employees



Reminiscence

happened into the store, and on his tour of inspection took in the back room where kegs and barrels rubbed cheeks with boxes and packing cases. One big hogshead lying on its side with a wooden spigot, just right height for an inquisitive youngster, caught his eye. He wondered what was in the barrel, and he took the quickest way to find out. He turned the tap. That was easy. A thick black stream of molasses poured out onto the floor. Try as he might, he couldn't turn off the incriminating flow, and he didn't dare linger too long as the pool widened so quickly.

Jack, when he grew up, went off to college in Winnipeg and became an outstanding athlete, but he swears he never ran so fast in any meet as he did out of the store and away altogether from the vicinity.

It's our second store I'm going to take you around — the same, only a bit more elaborate than the first, to meet the growing needs of Paradise and its district around.

There is a counter on either side of the building, a double centre counter and Dad's office behind this counter near the back. Some glass show cases, big coal oil lamps, shelves and shelves up to the ceiling piled high with supplies. You have seen this store in any movie of pioneer days anywhere.

On the floor, kegs of salt herring, of vinegar, barrels of ginger snaps, of crackers, of salt, of white sugar. The brown kind has to be bagged as soon as open before it turns to stone. Sacks of potatoes, turnips, onions, kegs of nails of all sizes and lengths, from shingle nails and tacks to spikes.

At one side at the back some hardware, pails, tubs, pots and pans and some harness.

On the grocery counter there is an enormous cheese, and among the odds and ends, pailfuls of candy. There are thimble-shaped cheap chocolates with plain white centres, or the far more delicious brown sugar filling, a pailful of "Christmas mixed," (Santa Claus couldn't have filled the children's stockings without a supply of mixed), a pailful of conversation lozenges.

These candies were really quite an invention and particularly helpful to tongue-tied swains. They met all the special requirements of your current romance. You weren't very old when you first noticed boys, openly of course with scornful indifference, inwardly with a queer, uncomfortable but nice little tickle somewhere around your stomach. "I love you" which so easily becomes "I hate you," "Meet me tonight," "See you in the moonlight," "Mother says No!" "Roses are red, violets are blue, honey is sweet and so are you," for what more could you ask? Besides being an accepted method of exchanging confidences these candies, long and strong on color and flavor, were grand to give a touch of luxury to the white wax we chewed for gum. Picked up off the floor, passed back and forth from grimy hand to grimy hand, finally landing in someone's open mouth, these candies surely did something to the modern theories about germs and bacteria. Either we were tougher and more resistant, or the germs were fewer and less persistent.

One particular candy favorite of mine (I liked them all) was a butterscotch sweetie. Maggie and Winnie's Dad had them in his store too. They were about an inch and a half long, round at the ends, about as thick as a new piece of blackboard chalk, a soft sugary outside and a heart of flint. I have never seen them since — even candy styles change — but no cherry cocktail of today has any such heavenly luscious flavor. I'd like a paper bagful on my desk this minute.

There were bull's-eyes, horehound sticks, barley sugar sticks, and striped peppermint and wintergreen sticks that you could suck down to a sharp point and porous enough to stick into the end of a juicy orange. You worked on them like on a straw in an ice-cream soda. There was my Mother's favorite red and white rock candy. There were big coarse licorice sticks, and little yellow canvas bags of inch pieces — far sweeter.

When we wanted candy, it was always difficult to choose which kind we would rather have, so the bag usually held a compromise mixture of a little of most.

This business of having to choose between things I liked equally well has always stumped me.

Once when the Christmas boxes had arrived from relatives in the East with some extra toys not definitely marked for my sister or me, Mother gave me first choice. Perhaps because I was younger, perhaps because I would make more noise over getting second best.

Truthfulness was one thing impressed on us always. No matter what we had done, we daren't try to cover up our tracks with even a tiny white lie. It wasn't always diplomatic, but it was always obligatory.

So when Mother asked me squarely, "Which ones would you like, dear?" I answered at once, "Mamma, I'd like them all." The absolute truth, although a mite selfish. I didn't expect to be given them all, but that was the right answer as far as I was concerned.

Only one candy I didn't like. It looked the same, smelt the same, tasted the same as the striped wintergreen and peppermint sticks. Because of this deceptive similarity you could fool a guileless child into eating it with gusto. At least you could fool a child once.

When swallowed, gone beyond recall, the similarity ended. The aftereffects were tremendous and devastating, like the effects produced by my Mother's jalop love potion.

This was "worm-candy" and it was kept in a drawer under the counter, I suppose for the protection of some predatory customers who wandered around taking a cracker here, a nip of cheese there, a few prunes or Christmas mixed while making up their minds what they had to buy. To have laid this candy in plain view out on the counter would have been to risk a charge of murder, or at least of losing a customer to an opposition storekeeper

more considerate. It would have cured the "free sample" habit and surely would have been justifiable.

There was the same unfortunate analogy with tea, the cup that cheers, and senna tea. The leaves of both looked the same and were brewed the same. Senna tea looked like real tea, but tasted and smelt like— —, well, I can't think of anything it tasted and smelt like, but you'll know, and it had a "kick like a Missouri mule." It was no picker-upper; it was a knocker-downer, a dragger-outer.

Funny thing about medicines then. It didn't really matter whether you weathered the winter without losing a day at school or not. In the Spring you might have all the pep and ginger of a new colt, but you were supposed to need toning up. Desperate cures were applied to anything but desperate ills.

The efficacy was in direct ratio to the unpalatability of the cure, or so it seemed.

The day's routine was disturbed to allow a course of worm medicine, of senna tea, or a night and morning internal application of the Dotheboy's Hall mixture of sulphur, cream of tartar and molasses.

I don't know when they decided you had had enough. Maybe when the supply ran out, maybe there were signs visible and intelligible only to mothers.

However, the seasonable concoction wasn't bad, and coughs were almost affected so a bottle of "Syrup of Red Spruce or White Spruce Gum" would appear.

Outside of these two prescriptions, roping and tying were almost necessary, when plain unadulterated unflavored castor oil, or fishy old "Scott's Emulsion" were indicated. Did you ever have to take electric oil dropped on a spoonful of sugar, pills hidden in jam. Oh boy! oh boy!

Little wonder druggists finally went into a huddle to discover something children would cry for, not because of— something tasteless or delicately flavoured, colorless or

Christmasy red and green, odorless or faintly aromatic, but something nevertheless that would fill the bill.

Every general store established long before specialized drug stores (real drug stores that dealt in drugs and not as a side line) carried a fairly comprehensive assortment of drugs and patent medicines, panaceas and cure-alls for most of the common ailments men and beast were heir to.

Though the Indians swore by snake and skunk oil, and a lot of the settlers by goose grease, Electric Oil was a favourite for rubbing on chest and back, in front of a good fire, as well as for taking on sugar. "Carter's Little Liver Pills" were even then supposed to be all that was necessary to bring happy days again. "Burdock's Blood Bitters" made a good appetizing nip before meals. Somebody's "Pain Killer," "Blaud's" or "Lydia Pinkham's Pills for Pale People," extracts of wild strawberry and cherry — all were there and all in great demand.

Flavoring extracts in quantity, not in variety, were stocked. The old choice between lemon or vanilla satisfied the women bakers. They didn't ask for almond, cinnamon, or wintergreen, and peppermint was medicinal for babies and old people with colic or indigestion.

Quantity was essential.

When "firewater" was scarce, the Indians bought or bartered for lemon and vanilla extracts by the dozen bottles. After all though, a flavouring jag has the usual drawbacks. It is not a fatal binge like a canned heat or methylated one, and no worse than synthetic gin or rubbing "alky."

For a pick-up on the morning after, "Lea and Perrin's Worcester Sauce" was the popular choice. It burnt so it was almost guaranteed to jolt a protesting stomach back into line. It was an antidote for too much lemon. Like a cuff on the ear or a smart slap on the wrist.

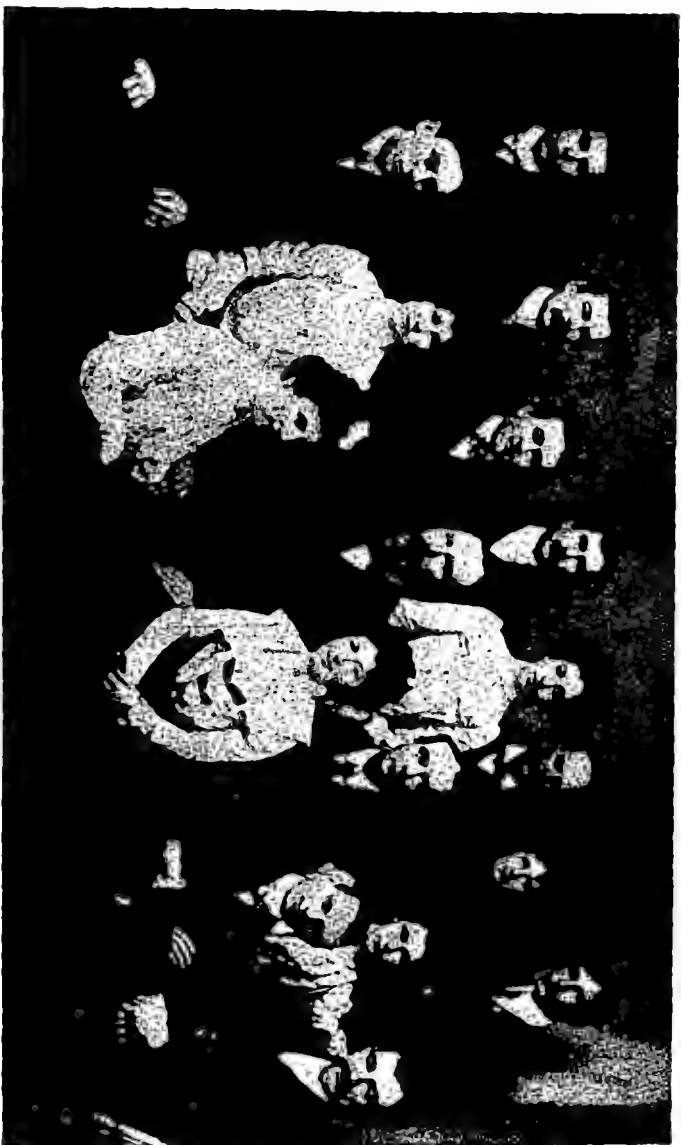
Stomachs could — they had to — take as much abuse then as now, and stage as quick a comeback.

In our store there was a modest boot department — just a few shelves stocked with larrigans and shoepacks, beaded handmade Indian moccasins and factory made. There were clumsy ugly felt boots, "dolges," (after the manufacturer I think) that were sure to develop a rim of chilblains on sensitive feet. Coal-oil packs, sliced raw onion dressings, nothing ever seemed to ease their awful itch and burn. There were rubbers to wear over moccasins and over boots; there were knee length and hip length waders. There were leather boots, regular and high laced; there were women's buttoned and laced canvas and leather. There were slippers, real carpet slippers, and prunellas, elastic-sided gaiters.

Those high laced and buttoned boots must have had a lot to do with the slender neat ankles of women, just as stays and corsets, boned, steeled and laced to the nth degree assured them the wasp waist fashion decreed. Their clothes were gusseted and gored, nipped and pinched in until they fitted like the paper on the wall. If you decided finally that life wasn't worth living; if you were always limping or a bit red in the face and short of breath; if you made up your mind that comfort and peace at any price was preferable to being smart and fashionable and bought a larger-sized boot, took out an odd steel, slackened a little the lacing, Nature was quick and inexorable to consolidate the ground thus gained. You could never retrace your steps, pride or no pride.

Among my foolish souvenirs are several dress waists of those days and several belts — belts that are just nice head bands now and that even my slim young daughters can't make meet around their waists by inches. It isn't a matter of pride that they still hang around — it is to back up the truth of a statement and because I have a weakness for hanging on to things linked with the past, like Father's old trunk and my grandmother's letters.

There was a ready-to-wear section for men in our



Group of Galloway Bros. Employees



Second Store, from 1886 -

general store. There wasn't much choice in the cheap factory-made suits and overcoats. Once my Father had a chance at the surplus of a wholesale men's-wear house. The counters and shelves overflowed with men's three-piece suits that were picked up at five dollars a suit as eagerly as the crowd buys hot dogs at a fair. I'd hate to venture a guess at what they had cost. My Dad wasn't in business for his health. He was a shrewd, keen buyer, so the profit was likely plenty, but everyone was satisfied. Sometimes five dollars is a huge sum. Certainly it bought a great deal more then than now, and what with rationing a bit the amount grows ever less.

Overalls, or as some said "over-hauls," and both seem right, odd pants (trousers to you) sheep-skin lined mackinaws and plaid lumberjacks were in greater demand than tweed or serges or broadcloths.

For women, no ready-to-wears—just bolts of flannels, flannelettes, jeans, twills, cottons—striped, spotted, plaid—linsey-woolsey, serges, bolts of heavy-corded and watered silks and satins that really could stand alone.

One dress of mine that I was inordinately proud of, belonged in that period. It was flannelette—yes, flannelette, a long-sleeved full-bloused, sailor-collared top and a straight gathered skirt, not one bit of tucking or shirring, not one inch of braid because it was striped—white, and the brightest Indian pink, quite sufficient unto itself. Sometimes when I was waiting for my Dad to come home from the store, I would stand up on a square-topped post of the gate halfway there. When the wind blew it wrapped my skirt around my "spindle-shanks," twisting the stripes till Uncle Bill said I looked like a barber's pole.

My children would think that a carnival dress, but if you stick on the back of my head a round straight-brimmed black sailor hat with a paddy green grosgrained ribbon, coin-spotted with white around the crown and down the back in tails, and if you'll complete the picture with the

black cotton stockings and high black buttoned boots, you'll maybe be forced into contrasting it with the way an eight-year old child is togged out today and agree that styles have changed.

The dress was made, the hat was trimmed especially for me, identical ones for my sister, for one trip to Scotland. You can imagine the shock my tony city cousins had when we landed in Toronto. They likely had an awful time explaining to all their friends the we hailed from the far uncivilized Northwest, where we hobnobbed with squaws and Indians. I must have been proud of that outfit to see them now so clearly. It sounds awful—It wasn't then.

For trimming the bolts of material, there were cards of braids, fancy and plain, military -- embroideries and rick-rack. This rickrack, white only, could be worked into endless designs, wheels and roses for good finer cottons. Sister's white dress boasts wide bands that offset my strawberry vine. There were cards of glass buttons, of bone, and of pearl. One of our best-loved playthings when we outgrew empty spools was the button-drawer in the sewing machine where all the odd cardless buttons from the store finally landed at stocktaking, and waited to ornament dresses and coats.

There were shawls for every day, for high days and holidays, lacy Shetland shawls for the baby, Paisley shawls for grandmother, fancy plaids, plain black shoulder and head shawls.

Of course the townspeople had other head-gear brought from back home or fashioned by clever fingers from velvet and silk and dolled up with flowers, feathers and quills. Some of these were real ostrich plumes, some just a sample or two from the old rooster's tail. Sometimes the beautiful wings of the wild duck, glossy jade-green and blue, sometimes the softly shaded brown wings of the little wood partridge were pressed into service. But velvet and fur for winter, silk and flowers for summer did get a bit monoton-

ous. The patch chests sometimes failed to produce anything different and suitable.

The time had come for another department or shelf to be added to the store — millinery, but no milliner.

As usual, Mother stepped into the breach.

Look into our kitchen — now a millinery workroom; wood fire crackling and sputtering, well-trimmed coal oil lamps lighted on the table, and in the centre of the floor a couple of packing cases.

From one big box we drag dozens of nested hats, felts or straws as the season might be; only two or three colors and two or three shapes, prim narrow brims, high crowns and low, floppy leghorns and beavers.

I can imagine the wholesales in Montreal and Toronto just threw in everything left over from the previous year, now out-of-date and unsaleable to the élite, with the thought that anything was good enough for the western trade. It was.

My Mother was head milliner. Sometimes a favorite visiting aunt aided and abetted with her skillful fingers and enlivened the time with her (like my Mother's) incorrigible sense of humor. Even my sister and I were sometimes permitted to tack on a ribbon or flower, sew up a lining seam, even suggest a design for a model.

The second carton held trimmings, boxes of wreaths, of forget-me-nots and wild roses, bunches of daisies and lilies of the valley, silk and velvet ribbons.

We taxed our ingenuity and our imagination to vary the treatment of trimmings.

The brim of this hat was turned up at one side, that of another at the other side, or at the back, and tacked so it wouldn't revert.

Little - French - Mary's children, 'Old - Blind - Louise's grandchildren musn't appear too much like town quality children. The squaws showed little inclination to change

their head shawls, but they were proud to have their children up-to-date.

Mother and Aunt Nell would mimic a possible customer, strutting around the kitchen as they modeled the finished product, taking off some town customer who they hoped would buy the hat created especially for them.

On Easter Sunday as my sister and I sat primly in church we'd side-glance at and nudge each other when Mrs. or Miss So-and-So pranced down the aisle, jaunty and self-conscious, hoping she was "the observed of all observers"; on her head a hat concocted just for her, maybe by us.

Would you be surprised or blame us if we were more interested in the millinery display in which we had a very personal interest, than in the sermon?

There were no copyrights in these first stocks of hats before we had a real milliner. It was just plain mass production.

No clerk in particular sold them -- they sold themselves to customers who pulled them down, pushed them back, tipped them one way or another till they found one that was just right.

Upstairs the store was a different world entirely from downstairs. On the floor were piles of wild hops and seneca root brought in by the Indians and dried here before being shipped to wholesale brewers or druggists in Winnipeg.

Here, too, in winter, were piled hundreds and hundreds of muskrat skins. You remember Paradise was on the edge of a wide marsh. The skins, inside out as they came off the drying stretching frames, were tied in bundles of twelve after being graded, and were periodically shipped out by the carload lot for as little as five and six cents a skin. I don't think Hudson Seal was on the market then. Those who could afford it wore real seal, beaver or persian lamb. These rat skins reappeared as rat coats, and coat

trimmings, unplucked and undyed. Where they all went to I don't know.

In the paper yesterday I saw that a provincial department had sold 200,000 rat skins at \$1.88 each, which was considered "a fairly satisfactory price." My Father would have thought so.

There were bear skins, black, brown, and the odd grizzly, smelly wolf skins, badger, weasel, mink and fox.

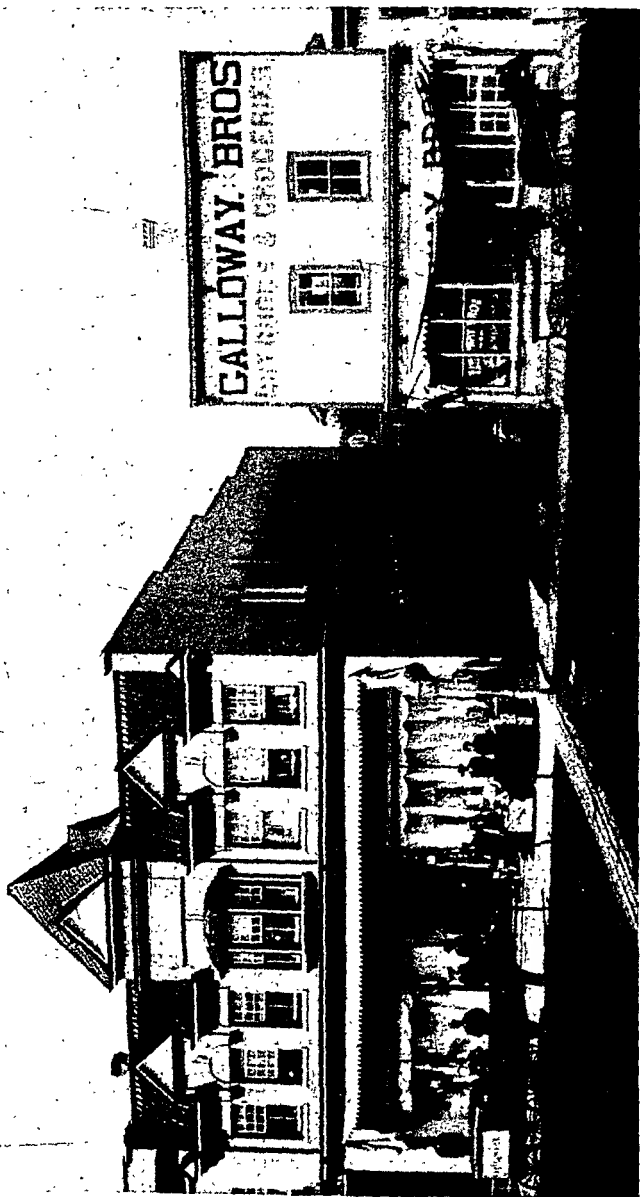
In a shed outside were cowhides, horsehides, salted and frozen and tied in square bundles, and some deer and moose. They didn't belong inside, as often they got pretty high before being shipped.

Maple syrup and honey came from the East in hogsheads. Neither could be sold that way so again my Mother came to the rescue. The syrup wasn't so difficult to handle — just mason jars or bottles under the spigot, but the honey was candied hard as a rock and had to be dug out and melted. When this bit of business was going full blast in our back kitchen all the bees and wasps and hornets in the country swarmed around. By their own special wireless they spread the good news that here honey was to be had in limitless quantities, instead of tiny drops gathered laboriously from the flowers. In clouds they hurried to be in on the ground floor. A boom in honey was on for the bees, with the usual boom consequences. In their greedy haste, many came to grief. We just skimmed them out of their native element and kept on filling bottles and jars.

That was just a little Paradise local flavor added to Ontario honey.

There was one point in running a general store, a nuisance or otherwise, depending on what you had to do because of it.

As soon as the wild fruits were ready for picking — strawberries, pincherries, chokecherries, cranberries and wild plums — the Indians brought them into the store for trade in baskets and pails. Throughout the week it was all



The Old and New Stores.

right, but if Saturday night arrived with some of them still unsold, they were dumped at our house to save what we could for jam, jelly and vinegar.

I'm telling you it wasn't so easy. Have you ever tried to pick over a candy-pailful of wild strawberries — they were the worst — or raspberries, a pail that had been full of berries, now settled well under the three-quarter mark and so a sodden juicy mass?

Washing strawberries and raspberries was out of the question. All you could do was pick out the leaves and the bugs and (shush) the odd worm, and hope that the pickers had been reasonably clean about their hands. All the oddments overlooked would come to the top in the boiling anyway and could be skimmed off.

By the time the fruit, in whatever form it turned out, jam, jelly, or preserves, appeared on the supper table with fresh buns or homemade bread, no memories of the picking-over were left to spoil your appetite.

Even tame small fruits came our way in job lots, and much of the winter supply on our fruit shelves represented an investment only of patience and energy and sugar.

Before I leave the store, will you come along with my sister and me on an errand for my Dad some Sunday afternoon?

After morning church he would often take a notion for something special for early tea, maybe a can of lobster and a bottle of Crosse and Blackwell's pickles, maybe some dried salt red herrings, maybe a plain salt herring to be boiled with potatoes in their jackets.

My sister and I would be given the key to the store, almost literally the key to heaven, and off we went with all sorts of cautions about locking the door when we went in, and being doubly sure it was locked when we left.

Our pride and importance was boundless. Shivers ran up and down our spines as we looked carefully around the deserted main street to be sure no loiterer was in the offing

who might take advantage of two small girls and get in too. Almost any Sunday morning you could have fired a cannon off down the street and hit no one, not even scared one.

Unlocking the heavy door, we slipped inside, into a place so different from the light, cheerful, busy weekday store we knew so well.

The blinds were down on the front windows and on the door. The counters on the dressgoods side with their bolts of material were covered with long strips of factory cotton. The silence in the semi-darkness was earsplitting. It was far, far more spooky than our lonely prairie cemetery.

The door carefully locked on the inside as per directions, we ran around the counter picking up first what we had been sent for. Then sampling anything we fancied, we would fill a paper bag with candies — a few of all our favorites.

Picture yourself in our shoes at our ages and you will not need to be told that we enjoyed ourselves.

We knew we mustn't be too long or they would worry at home.

Taking the same elaborate precautions as before going in, peering out behind a corner of the blind just to be sure no one had arrived since we entered, out we'd step into the welcome warmth and sunshine. The door locked, each rattled the door handle to be quite sure, then home, trying to appear blissfully unconscious of our bulging pockets, smug as the cat that has just swallowed the canary.

We were never asked what we had taken for ourselves. Likely Father remembered his own scanty childhood and the strawberry jam tarts he just couldn't pass up, so he never embarrassed us. He must have had a pretty good idea that we had had a little graft on the side. As for Mother, as usual we shared the spoils with her.

The highlights in the days of modern children — movie shows, motor and aeroplane rides, wiener roasts and hikes, midway shows and rides — surely none can ever measure

up quite to those thrilling Sunday afternoons when my sister and I were given the keys to the store.

That, in part, was our general store — the beginning from which our last big brick store grew with every department complete, a cash-carrier system, where my Dad introduced the first coppers into Paradise and a staff of thirty.

General stores in small towns and villages are more than just places of business. They are, in a sense, a social club or meeting place where friends and neighbors come to talk about the weather, the crop, politics and new settlers.

It was, too, a gauge to measure a man's or woman's worth.

Could you imagine a woman would put a stone in the bottom of a butter crock when she packed it? Could you credit a man rolling a rock in a cow or horse hide before it was frozen stiff?

It happened more than once.

You could judge pretty accurately if a man were honest or dishonest, generous or mean, a good worker or a slacker, ready to give as well as take in the daily contacts of a pioneer general store.

“For so it falls out,
That what we have we prize not to the worth
Whiles we enjoy it; but being lacked and lost,
Why, then we rack the value; then we find
The virtue that possession would not show us
Whiles it was ours.”

XI

"It is with rivers as it is with people — the greatest are not always the most agreeable, nor the best to live with."

TO THE first settlers in any country, rivers must mean a great many things other than a pleasant addition to a home site. Rivers were a quick, easy ready-made means of transportation. They insured a plentiful supply of water all the time for every purpose, and usually lots of wood from the trees that kept them company.

The farms first to be taken up were surveyed to run two miles back from the Red and the Assiniboine, but after all every farm couldn't border the rivers. Manitoba was a farming province, and the most important factor in a farm is soil.

From the number of times you see their small first log homes built out in the open, unprotected from winter's sweeping winds, and summer's blistering heat, you would almost think those settlers had dumped their belongings in the first convenient place they came to. In a hurry to get a roof over their heads they didn't look too far afield for ideal locations in their homestead on which to build.

When they were all settled and in a year or so outgrew that first log home, they built a new house beside it and it was demoted to a shelter for chickens and stock. The die had been cast — that was home.

When time came round for improvements to be made, things began to happen. A windbreak for protection;

rows of quick-growing maples from seed or transplanted from bluff and river bank; a few shrubs and flowers like they had back home.

I always feel there is courage and hope in the house, however small and discouraged the farm may look, if there are a few plants or flowers outside, or making a dash of color against the window panes. You don't expect a farmer whose day is from before dawn to long after dark to use precious daylight puttering and fiddling around flower beds and lawns, but their womenfolk can and usually do manage a few minutes away from their own multitudinous duties for pleasure, not profit.

It is not easy to find a basis for comparison of natural and man-made beauty.

Beauty is Beauty wherever you find it.

Only your reactions are different.

A sunset, a sunrise, a rainbow, a misty mountain peak, a fleecy cloud, a tumbling waterfall, a flaming autumn bush — all the special things in nature leave you breathless, humble, and reverent and silent.

Massing of colors, grouping of shrubs, vistas of formal gardens in this direction, in that, rustic bridges — all man-made beauty makes you vocal instantly, loud in your superlatives to express your delight in and appreciation of the artistry of it all, of the ingenuity of man.

You see *man* where before you saw *God*.

All the little things you do in the line of improvement take time. All the big things take money, and there is where the shoe pinches. Farmers are always short of time and money.

But free to each of us with eyes to see is the glory of our sunsets and sunrises and of our rainbows. Free is the multicolored beauty of the autumn, the varied tender greens of spring, the matchless purity of new fallen snow. Free is the open sweep of our plains to the faraway mysterious horizon where land and sky meet.

Pity it is that we are sometimes too tired or too busy or too fed-up in general to realize that an outward look is enlivening and restful. It is the silver lining to the darkest cloud.

I'm not vouching for the truth of the statement nor of the deduction, but I read in a paper not long ago that recent medical examination of army recruits in the United States had established the fact that there were far more short-sighted men from the cities than from the country. The reason advanced for this was that city dwellers' range of vision is narrow. They look on things near at hand and men from the country more often look around and beyond.

"As far as the eye can see" has a definite meaning on our prairies and if the fact that there is sometimes nothing much to see gets some people down, it is not true of others.

My Dad loved beauty in nature. He wasn't thinking only that it would be handy to have water near. He knew how much a river added to land that was to be the site for *home*. That is why he chose river lots for the house he built for his eastern bride.

- As rivers go, our river was very second rate. It was only a hair-like line on the map of Manitoba, beginning in the Riding Mountains to the west, and losing itself in the lake to the northeast, a wavering wandering line over which in small letters is "White Mud River."

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

Maybe so; certainly the perfume of a rose would always be the perfection of fragrance, but "rose" does nothing to stir your imagination. It's just a color that a dozen other flowers are painted with, and the queen of flowers merits a more distinctive handle.

"Lily of the Valley," "Golden Rod," "Forget-Me-Not," "Indian Pipe," "Pitcher Plant," "Bitter-Sweet,"—names like these paint a picture and are in themselves melodious.

I could wish more explorers and discoverers when they

are naming their finds gave rein a little to their poetic instincts.

Take up a map of Canada and glance over it with its myriads of blue splashes and black feathered lines and stars — its lakes, ranges, peaks, and rivers.

You can't tell from the map of course, and quite naturally, we have lakes that are shallow and swampy, drab and mud colored, but we have so very many perfect gems, rock set, tree fringed, large and small, jade green and blue, shimmering, shiny, silvery.

Shut your eyes for a moment and let your imagination pick them out one by one, then look at the names from which some suffer.

Every bird that flies—loon, bittern, gull, pigeon, duck—boasts a namesake.

Every animal that claims our home as theirs — buck, bear, beaver, moose, elk, buffalo — has a lake.

There is Frog Lake, Snake Lake, Birch Lake, Fish Lake, Good Fish, White Fish and Leech.

There are Mina, Marjorie, Annette, Florence, Marion, Nora, Mabel, Christina, Marie, Winnifred lakes, and such to no end.

There are Round, Long, Big, Clear Lakes, till the name means less than nothing as an identification.

Christopher Morley says, "When I was a boy in Baltimore, I used to hear often of a place called Blue Ridge Summit. I never went there; it would probably disillusion; but what a picture of mystic beauty was in the name."

Presumably it works both ways. Round Lake, number one, two or three, may be worth a trip of miles to see, but it does not pull me there like "Calling Lake" does, and it may turn out to be just a smelly little mud hole.

Thank goodness some use was made of the soft picturesque Indian names that were right at hand — Numtigah, (Stony for Marten), Mistaya, (Grizzly), Utikuma, Manito,

Minnewonka, Wabishaw, Winagami, Kimiwan, Waskesieu — "all names like symphonies."

So with our mountain peaks, named for Swiss or Indian guides, explorers or professors, who found, climbed, or died on them, or after Hudson's Bay factors who maybe deserved the honor and after royalty who maybe didn't. Coming generations will wonder who in thunder they were, and why they rated a mountain peak, but there will always be a reason for White Cap, Throne, Castle, Sulphur, Pyramid, Coronet, Olympus, Diadem, Pilot, Signal, Day-break, Cathedral, and no fault can be found with perpetuating the memory of an unassuming, martyred woman, Edith Cavell.

Don't you like No-See-Um Creek better than its uninspired neighbor Mosquito Creek? There is a delicious bit of humor there that forces a laugh. You can see a stolid old Indian almost pestered to death at the fire of questions from some trapper, "Where's this" and "Where's that," "Which way did somebody or something go from here," when the trail vanished, indifferent and absolutely uncar-ing, grunting over and over "No-See-Um."*

Peace, Assiniboine, Athabaska, Sunwapta, Kootenay, Vermilion, Rolling, Broken Head, Indian, Smoky, Medicine, Maligne, are good names for rivers. I like all the Indian "Minnie's." I'd like Weary River, Laughing or Singing River. I'd like River of Lost Horizons, and I like John Buchan's Sick Heart River — La Rivière du Coeur Malade.

Perhaps you understand I'm working off a pet peeve before I break down and admit that my haloed river of Paradise has no more whimsical, happy, beguiling name than White Mud. White isn't so bad, but I hate mud. If I knew the French equivalent for mud, I'd tell you glibly it was La Rivière de la --- Blanche.

*(I have just read that No-See-Um is Indian for Mosquito, so my deductions are all off key, but look at the exercise my imagination had!)

Misnomers are humiliating and misleading, but the admission is forced from me that White Mud is no misnomer, but unfortunately only too true, and it stands naked and unadorned. Perhaps because it was only a little, unimportant river, it belonged to us in a more intimate way than if it had been a big impressive, swaggering, river like the Mississippi or Missouri, or even the Assiniboine.

Because of the exact way John Buchan paints and points his thoughts, I should like to quote here a passage from his autobiography. It tells so much better than I ever could just what I mean.

"A man is only truly intimate with the countryside he has known as a child, for then he lived very near the ground and knew the smell of the soil and the small humble plants that live at the roots of the grasses. He explored it on all-fours, whereas he strides or gallops over late landscapes."

How true that is of more than countrysides! You can only really know a person if you live with them under the same roof; see them in all tempers, know why they do such and such at first hand. You may have friends of years' standing whom you do not know at all. You judge by what you see, and form lasting opinions which may have no real basis at all. They are snobbish or friendly, hypocritical or true blue, cold and cruel, or warm and tender-hearted; they are mean or generous. "Judge not that ye be not judged" is difficult of practice.

With our yard and our river I was truly intimate, because I knew it the only way as a child — on all-fours. I explored every twist and turn of the river's course, and of its banks overhung with willows that dragged their skirts or dangled their finger tips and covered with wild cucumbers, hops and poison ivy (to which we were evidently immune.)

That is, as long as it was *our* river I knew it.

Where it first came to us, under the oaks and the elms, we built a playhouse of packing cases — the various other

Maggies and I. This was quite an elaborate affair — a large main section with smaller bedrooms (boxes) on each side. Many happy days and years were spent in building, adding to and furnishing this mansion in the woods. It must have finally been worth its weight in nails.

That it was well and truly built seemed to have been proven as it was still upright many years later to show to my children. Unfortunately they didn't seem at all impressed with the shapeless huddle of boards covered with fallen branches and leaves and hops and full of nettles. They saw it for what it was then. I saw it through the blur of years, and I wore the rose-tinted glasses of happy memories of "dear dead days beyond recall."

I'll bet you have often been in the same sad position — exhibiting proudly something you valued and loved, and being vaguely disappointed at the lack of interest displayed by your audience.

Leaving my playhouse behind and the little island around which we pretended to swim, the river ran along the foot of the garden. It was a convenient water supply providing the necessary for pails of liquid refreshment doled out to early radishes, lettuce and pepper grass, for cabbage, cauliflower and tomato plants and for beds of cucumbers and cantaloupes. It was a wonderful garden. I'd like to have the run of one half as good now.

Past the garden, past the barn to a little pier at the end of a steep path leading from the back yard where we got water for the stable occupants and for washing and scrubbing. On and on it went, paralleling the long avenue of maples to the front gate.

There it left us and ceased being our own particular friend, but still an acquaintance.

Under a high, rickety bridge, sharply east past the old mill where a wooden dam put a bridle on it, in an effort to insure a satisfactory supply of water for the mill and the railway water tank during the dry months. North again

under a narrow foot bridge in a big loop that took it back and almost opposite my playhouse.

We didn't always have an island in Paradise, but every Paradise if it isn't an island itself, should certainly have one within its borders or make one.

A very prosy, unromantic reason led to the making of our island.

When the spring rains came, and the deep snow in the Riding Mountains melted, our river was "in spate" as they say in Scotland.

I'd rather like to know where that expression originated — what hidden significance it holds. It hasn't, at least to the uninitiated, the aptness that most colloquial Scottish expressions have. You scarcely ever need explain "dour" and "fey," "daft" and "scunner."

At such flood times, old man river had difficulty navigating the sharp turns of the loop in his hurry to get nowhere fast, in this case his journey's end and his own finish in the lake.

The bridge at our front gate strained against its mooring ropes as it rose and fell on the river's heaving, pushing shoulders. Crossing it as it floated and swayed was an adventure, and there was always the possibility that it would go out leaving the homes on the loop isolated, and their occupants marooned.

To forestall this possible misadventure, the town fathers or someone in authority conceived the bright idea of cutting a very narrow ditch across the base of the loop to allow the river to short-cut.

All-a-sameeee-Panama and Suez.

You know the way child psychologists diagnose a ram-bunctious child (not their own) and prescribe the treatment?

That's not a plain question — that's a rhetorical question that is supposed to require no answer.

They tell you not to snatch your precious ornament

away and slap Young Hopeful down, but to hand him (or her) something worthless and say, "Now, dear, see this *beautiful* thing! Wouldn't you like to make whoopee with it?" While you ease out the ornament.

It is a marvelous theory.

The ditch was dug — just a wink, a gentle nudge to Ole Man River.

He saw the point and co-operated whole-heartedly, tearing out the sides of the ditch in a paroxysm of glee at having a new toy.

Was he laughing up his sleeve?

You bet he was!

He made such a good job at widening the man-made channel that very soon the ditch was the river, and the river threatened to be be nothing but a memory.

The town fathers, or what have you, are all wrong again.

A new dam was built across the end of the ditch that had just been dug, with gates intended to control the temper of the river.

But we had our island.

The same mix-up happened years later when someone decided to drain the big marsh, and ran into unwelcome and unforeseen results. They wished they had left Nature to handle her affairs alone.

It was like the settlers too, who maybe living near the river built their homes in the open, refusing for some good reason the shelter provided along the wooded banks, and then moved the trees up; sort of Mahomet and the Mountain style.

Everyone, (children and grownups,) love change and variety.

Each season is welcomed with open arms coming, and would be speeded going with a surreptitious little kick where it would help most, if possible.

How you long for forty below when it is one hundred or so in the shade, and vice versa!

Just to transpose a couple of words, it's

"How happy could I be with *l'other*
were *either* dear charmer away!

For children, each particular season provides its own particular thrills.

From the standpoint of *la rivière de la mud blanche*, spring was the heyday.

Seems my genders are a bit mixed with *la riviere* and Ole Man River, but I hope you won't mind.

Before the water got too high and covered from sight the mill-dam, the fish began "running."

"Silly expression isn't it?"

While this phenomenon of Nature lasted, all our free time after school and on Saturdays was spent there.

With a barrel hoop, a hoe, a rake or any such contraption we swooped and scooped out suckers and jackfish as they went tumbling through the narrow spillway and down the sloping apron.

We would land them, watch them flip and flop and thrash around gasping, then before they were gone too far along the long traverse, we'd throw them back into the water below the dam.

It just happened we didn't eat either suckers or jack. Not many families ate suckers, but jack or pike weren't on the black list and were often cleaned, salted and packed in barrels against a possible rainy day.

Several years ago I happened to read in one of the papers that our lowly, despised sucker was sold in enormous quantities under the name of grayfish and considered good eating in a country not a million miles from here.

Oh well! There's a precedent for that!

Not all smoked goldeyes, Winnipeg's own very special breakfast treat, could stand having their pedigree investigated. The supply and demand developed a tendency to be unbalanced, but the market must not suffer while there were fish galore in our lakes that could be stand-ins.

Sometimes when I have been served calves' liver that I am sure was years out of its class, or am half-way through chicken à la king and discover a bone that I think only a rabbit could claim, it isn't much of a sedative to my restless stomach to remember that what you don't *know* may not be true.

For all I *know*, suckers and jack are good eating, but if I have to scale and clean or fillet them, I'd just as soon they fulfilled their destiny in the lake or river.

In fact, I'd sooner.

In those exciting flood times of early spring, every night before dark, my sister and I would push little sticks into the soft ground along the path to mark high water, and first thing in the morning out we would rush to find out how far the river had risen in the night.

We'd listen to our Dad discussing with Mother the possibility of a disastrous flood. He would hope it would freeze a little so the snow wouldn't melt so fast and the surplus water could have a chance to get soaked down into the ground and not rushed away in such a hurry.

Mentally we'd take the opposite side. It would be heavenly, we thought, to be cut off from school for a day or so, or forced to move upstairs to live like they did down south when the levees broke.

If you are a grownup, you may doubt the genuineness of the thrill of wading out in long-legged rubbers (quite unnecessarily) to "the little house," and of sitting shivering with excitement as you speculated on what would happen if you floated away looking like a princess in a sedan or like Elaine the Lily Maid of Astolate. There was the much more awful alternative of the floor giving way. You knew how deep Michel had dug. Would the sympathy over your premature death be clouded just a little by the manner of your going? Would people laugh instead of cry?

Not even a small child enjoys being laughed at.

While on the subject which, I am willing to admit, is quite

"infra dig," (I like these college expressions, particularly in connection with bourgeois subjects) so skip it if you feel that way, I'd like to declare that our "little house" was quite the nicest I have ever seen in quite a wide experience, and the most modern in those pre-modern plumbing days.

The floor was painted every year with yellow or gray paint left over from the kitchen, as was the dash or kick-board, or whatever is the term used architecturally. The plane with the square hinged lids was scrubbed as white as elbow grease and lye could make it.

Our little house was one of The Specialists' "Two Holers," and that reminds me of something that happened many years later down at our summer cottage at the lake.

Our two small girls and two other small girls were showing a little visitor from the city all the sights of the beach, beginning, as was natural, with everything that was most unusual and strange.

This of course was the row of little telephone-booth shacks, some of them old sentry boxes from Camp Hughes, along the foot of the lots that faced the lake. There was none of them very classy, but there were singles and doubles.

The guest was unimpressed and a bit upstage.

The discussion that followed the tour finally ended in a new method of deciding the "status quo" of their different families and friends.

If you had just one toilet in your home you were just average. It helped if you even knew people who had more. Our children boastfully claimed to belong almost to nobility because their home had three toilets, and they knew a family in Winnipeg who had three.

The little visitor could only score one, so was definitely put in her place.

There is a radio program on the air just now that is dedicated to the Fathers and Mothers of today and their bewildering offspring.

That adjective is just right.

Children themselves, and their ability to invent new standards by which to judge and appraise, are positively bewildering.

The high light, the pièce-de-résistance, in our little house was the paper on the wall; illustrations from the Montreal Herald and Toronto Globe Christmas colored editions.

Every carnival ice-palace Montreal ever boasted and bragged of was there — the new one added yearly. Fashions of the basque and bustle days fascinated us and made us a little dubious of our own anatomy, lacking at that time (Oh! me, oh my!) all the presumably necessary and important bumps and bulges.

Outside the door with its round glazed window, was a wide board platform, a nonchalant oak or elm at the side, and in front a discreet criss-cross trellis covered in summer with hops or Virginia Creeper, and in winter with memories and a tangle of bare stems.

Every few years when Old Michel came around in the spring, Mother would decide to move the little house. A new site was carefully chosen under another big tree with due consideration, among other things, for the view.

We never had a woodpile near.

Old Michel marked out an oblong and started to dig. When he had gone down so far that his feet were getting wet and his old hat was out of sight as he bent over the spade, and we thought he was headed for China, Mother would say, "Enough!" and up the ladder or spade he'd come.

Then he would set to work to build a solid wooden cribbing, and when this was sunk in the new location, the ceremony of moving with the aid of any handy half-breeds took place.

All that remained was to see who would have the honor of being the first to pass judgment on the view.

Just a word in passing. You have likely taken for granted that "we" means my sister and me. More often than not it didn't. Because of the little difference in age and the big difference in likes and dislikes, we didn't play together a great deal, at least outside. So if I'm telling of doing something or other that isn't quite dignified, just pretend it is any of the Maggies I chummed with — Bena, Fan, Goldie, Mabel or May, though May came later! They won't mind at all, and my sister would prefer it.

Only once did our river come up to the banking at one side of our house, flood the cellar, caving in the walls and putting us at least once on a par with those other youngsters who enjoyed a flooded cellar almost every year.

We tasted to the full the delight of standing on the top rungs of the ladder, looking into the darkness, venturing down gradually to the last one above the water, the better to see the various boxes, baskets and bottles floating around in that "world of waters dark and deep."

It took far less imagination that we possessed to see all sorts of awful things instead of big bulgy sticks and little narrow sticks.

Lying safe and warm in our beds at night, my sister and I would discuss the possibility of the whole house collapsing like the temple did around the unbelievers' ears when Samson still had his health and his hair. We'd wonder about our chances of escape in that event.

They claim the terrible destruction in some of the big English cities after wholesale bombings by the Germans is really a blessing in disguise, (well disguised) making possible the rebuilding of whole districts on a model plan.

The flooding of our cellar was an undisputed blessing.

When the river dropped back to its proper place after its splurge, Michel or Francois got busy on a pump. The water was drained away. The hole in the ground, and it wasn't much more, was enlarged; bricked all around, floored with bricks and divided into two by a brick partition.

From then on, we had a furnace room and a fruit, pickle and vegetable storage room.

I often wonder now as I buy a box or a bushel basket of apples, what ever became of the barrels of apples kept in the store room — Northern Spies, Greenings for pies, Talman Sweets, Russets and Snows — all for our own use.

The stepladder was replaced by a stair, still steep, but with steps instead of rungs.

Our spooky cellar was now a basement, but still pitch dark, unless the door was opened to put in wood, and we never went down without carrying a bright light high just in case a toad or a frog or a little garter snake had tumbled in with the wood.

There had been two disastrous floods in the early days in Paradise but, like the grasshopper plague and the diphtheria epidemic, they were before my time.

This was the nearest approach to a disastrous flood that I knew, but it was surely good enough to keep the old man in the river dreaming as he drowsed through the summer.

He kicked over the traces everywhere.

The outlying farms were shallow lakes with trails all lost under the water. East of town miles of railway right of way were washed out, and we'd trudge miles back and forth to see the section men trying to anchor the tracks. To attempt to re-balast was useless while the water ran between the ties like a mill race. Main street was a canal, the river rushing along and around the corner east to follow the old Saskatchewan Trail back to where it met itself at the island. The only way to cross from one side of the street to the other was on a narrow causeway of manure. The town bridge was under water, and farmers from the north and town people who lived on the other side had to make use of any kind of thing that would float, raft or boat, to get back and forth to shop and to school.

Always in the spring when the river was high, we'd rush from school to hang over the railing, watching the big

cakes of ice rush past, rolling, tumbling, grinding. We'd throw sticks down from one side and dash across to see them come out at the far side and be out of sight in no time.

One such day I took my place with the others along the rail. I had just picked up my new straw bonnet at the store, a round cream sailor with red bands in the brim, and a wide red ribbon band and streamers. It didn't have an elastic — Mother would sew that on — but I had to wear it.

Hanging far over the top board of the railing, in my excitement I forgot about the absent elastic. A tiny puff of wind caught the edge of the brim of my brand new hat, and we rushed to the other side of the bridge to watch it sailing jauntily away on a cake of ice.

That was one hat of mine my Mother never saw, and the only one with red in and on that I ever possessed, even for fifteen minutes.

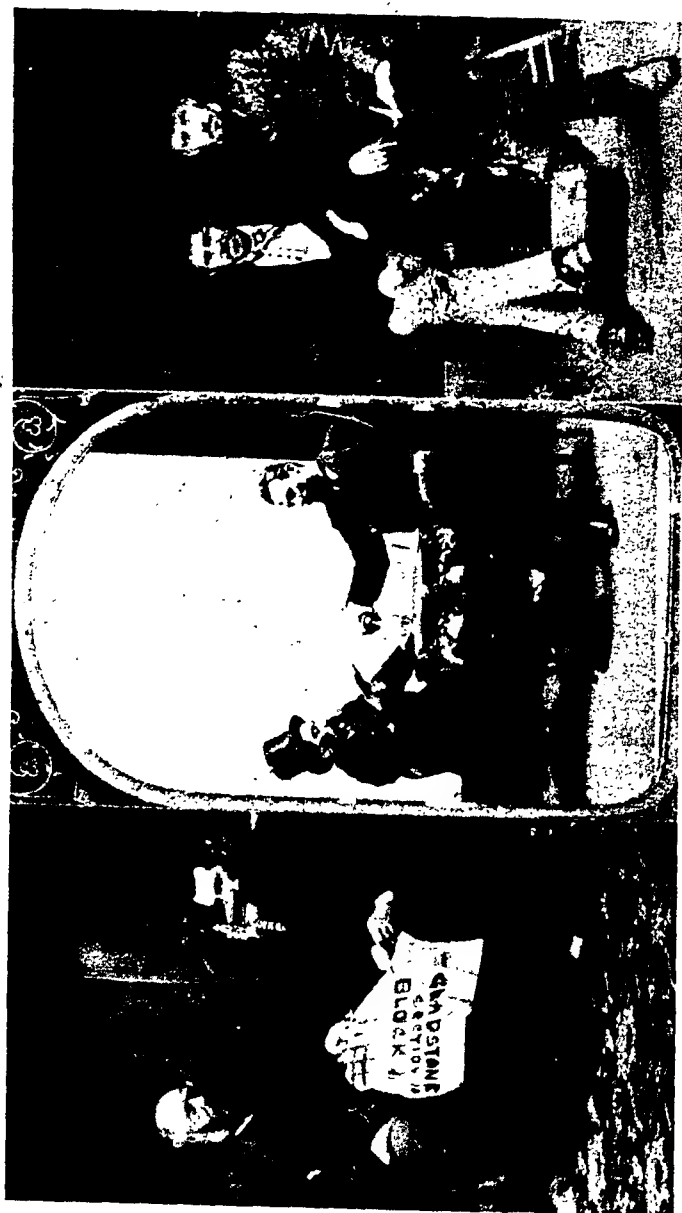
All the store basements were flooded that year, when the river, breaking loose, poked inquisitive fingers into every hole and corner, meaning a considerable loss for many of the merchants; but we children all had a grand time just as Ole Man River did.

I wish, however, that I'd been around those two or three years when Paradise boasted a steamboat on the river.

This boat, the "St. Boniface," thirty or forty feet long and nine feet wide, drawing three feet of water, was one of the visible evidences of the first year's boom optimism. As it was possible to navigate the endless twists and turns in the river only during spring floods, and even then it was of no practical use, the "St. Boniface" was soon left high and dry, stranded on the river bank two or three miles from town.

I doubt if the years have left a trace of it, but at least the fact that there once was a steamboat on the river goes to prove that "la rivière de la *mud* blanche" was, if mistakenly, considered a potential waterway a long time ago.

"The sports of children satisfy the child."



Companions—Boon and Boom

XII

"Summer treads on heels of Spring."

THE BOOM time of spring over, our river friend was quite a different person from the up-and-coming giant of those vitalizing days.

He went into a decline, losing interest in everything, a decline much like an enervating pernicious anaemia. He dwindled and shrank till in most places an average broad jumper could have cleared the water with feet to spare. If that is rather ambiguous — with a margin on either side.

The banks cluttered up with willow, overrun with matted wild cucumber and hops that did their best to quickly cover up the rubbish hang-over from spring's debauch, were a satisfactory substitute for the haunted reaches of the Dismal swamp and the canebrakes of the south, or for Indian ambushes.

We devotees of tales like "Dred" and "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and Fenimore Cooper's stories, played by turns being runaway slaves and terror-stricken settlers fleeing to save our scalps.

We would hide in the hayloft listening while in imagination the baying of the bloodhounds, or the war whoops of the Indians drew nearer or faded in the distance, then jump out the little high window where the hay had been stuffed into the loft, first making sure of a good soft spot to light on by throwing half of it out, more or less.

Then a crawl on all fours down to and along the muddy

bank in a cold sweat if we by mischance disturbed a garter snake or a frog. However, they made the swamp all the more realistic and were king snakes or rattlers or something equally worthwhile.

Sometimes before we finally reached sanctuary in the friendly shelter of the cabin in the clearing (my dolls' house) our dog Rowdy would come running to see what was up. He was a bloodhound on our track.

Rowdy, one of the few dogs that I remember, was a light brown, short haired, fairly large dog, with a lovely head. He was likely a mongrel, as I have never seen another quite like him, but as mixed blood often produces strange beauty in human beings, why not in dogs?

Rowdy had only one bad habit.

Maybe it was just the outcropping of a rather rough desire to play. Maybe he had inherited from unknown sources a dislike for pork on the hoof. Maybe he was just allergic to pigs.

Whatever the reason, he insisted on haunting any pigpens that were handy, jumping into them and giving the pigs a run-around.

The porkers weren't built for speed, as Rowdy was. They were always a bit snooty — never wanted to play with Rowdy, or didn't know the same games.

Usually in his effort to knock some sense into them they would get rather badly mauled.

Complaints and threats followed regularly.

One day Rowdy came home with the shoe on the other foot. He was the one who was a bit the worse for wear.

He could, indeed rather enjoyed handling any number of hogs, but a man with a gun was outside of his line.

He had been the target of a well directed shot, but too far away to be seriously hurt.

However, he carried a lot of little lead pellets that made small bunches of hair stand on end all over his body and marred the glossy, smooth perfection of his coat.

The lesson wasn't learned.

One day he didn't come home.

There was no funeral, no tears, no grave to care for.

Rowdy was just gone.

On warm-summer days we went swimming in our river, though the modern slang "dunking" is a far better word to describe our sport.

"Dunking" wasn't coined soon enough.

No child of today whose first bathing suit is a chic one-piece affair of silk, satin or pure wool who is privileged to splash around at sandy beaches, or who has the run of paddling and bathing pools has the least realization of the handicaps under which my chums and I suffered when we had the urge to swim.

The boys' swimming hole was near the ditch dam, and if we heard their abandoned shrieks, or caught a glimpse of their bonfire through the trees, we left them in undisputed possession of the whole river.

Boys, you see, had none of the finer instincts, none of the innate modesty of small girls. They seemed to go native, to develop into little demons when they stripped off pants and shirt. They dived in and out of the water like young seals, gloriously free, untrammelled; they paraded brazenly around their fire in their birthday suits, howling like young Indians while they dried sufficiently to pull on their scanty clothes.

At the foot of the garden where the river split to form a little island about the size of an average room, there was a narrow place — our swimming hole.

If you happen to be there some hot Saturday in July, or August, you are apt to catch us at it.

Here we are, running down from the house, past the barn and through the garden, barefoot, flannelette nightie held up around our knees — nighties long enough to wrap our feet up in winter, and long sleeved.

Arrived breathless at the river bank, we start carefully

in the water, gingerly pulling one foot after the other out of the "sludgy, squidgy" mud.

A scream, "Oh! There's a leech," and a frantic dash out into water waist-high. Then a flop and a flounder, and out we came far dirtier than when we went in and with nighties that Mother said would never come white again.

Gertrude Ederle herself would have been a failure under the same circumstances.

This water sport was one that my sister never shared.

Later we used to go on all-day picnics to Stewart's Ford in the river several miles from Paradise, and having by this time graduated to a bought bathing suit, I went seriously at the business of learning to swim.

For many years that first bathing suit of mine waged a losing battle against moths, then in a way they have, they took it entirely out of my hands and left me only a memory.

It was a black lustre creation with a narrow pin-stripe of white, elaborately trimmed with wide white military braid; a blouse with a wide sailor collar, and elbow sleeves hitched to a voluminous pair of better-than-knee-length bloomers like a clown's suit. Over this, to "make assurance doubly sure," went a knee-length very full skirt.

Many years later I used occasionally in emergencies to don a suit much on the same plan, sailor collar and military braid, and was always greeted with derisive hoots of laughter and shouts of "Here comes the Admiral."

At the ford, conventionally covered up and my hair pinned up on top of my head, I painstakingly went through, over and over again, the accepted motions of that old stand-by of Queen Victoria's days, the breast stroke, trying to lift my leaden feet to the surface, and not look like a duck diving for food.

It was once I proved success was possible if you tried hard enough, long enough.

When I did achieve the marvel of having my feet and my head both on the surface at the same time, I'm sure my

triumphant shout of "I've got it, Ede." (Ede being a cousin who could swim like a seal) could be heard miles away.

That's what I hoped for, anyway.

I have never forgotten how to swim since that memorable day at the ford in the river when I "got it," but I think that futile old breast stroke was so indelibly printed on my one-track subconscious that it precluded the possibility of being any good at the Australian crawl, the over-arm, or any of those really worthwhile strokes that send young swimmers now zooming through the water.

My swimming never has improved a great deal, kid myself as I might once.

My breathing and my stamina have become decidedly worse, and worst of all I have lost the urge somewhere in the years between.

It's small consolation or compensation that with every added pound, my ability to float indefinitely has increased.

Philosophically I have decided once and for all that if the need ever arose I'd not waste my energies trying to save myself by swimming, but just turn over on my back and float and float and float.

The only thing that has improved with the years is my outfit. Right now it is an ocean-blue "velva" with white net bathing shoes and white rubber cap with a saucy blue flower on top, and any day I'd trade it for the old black braid trimmed lustre, if at the same time I could dispense with a few of the bumps and bulges, the "spare tires" that were missing as a child.

When my young daughter comments, "Mother, you are certainly no bathing beauty," I think it is about time to do my swimming in the bathtub. It's far less trouble, and it is private.

"Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying."

XIII

"O world I cannot hold thee close enough!

Thy winds, thy wide gray skies!

Thy mists that roll and rise!

Thy woods, this autumn day, that ache and sag
And all but cry with color."

OF ALL the seasons that affected Old Man White
Mud I loved Autumn or Fall best, though there
was less fun ~~with~~ the river.

I still like Autumn better than winter or summer, or
even spring, but now I am more acutely conscious of, more
sensitive to the fact that the budding, growing, gracious
days are gone. Even the loveliness of hazy halcyon golden
days cannot quite dull the fact that everything is dying
with the year.

Next year—next year!

"How long a time lives in one little word!"

From Christmas to Christmas, an eternity when you
are young, and yet so pitifully short when you are grown
up and forward glances are full more of apprehension
than of hope.

We double our heartaches by anticipating bridges we
may never have to cross, but children double only
pleasures in looking forward.

Long Sunday walks after morning church, down little
winding paths among the trees, kicking the piles of dry
fallen leaves ahead of us with shuffling feet as we did in
new fallen snow, hunting for late mushrooms in deserted

farm yards — these were things to look forward to all week.

The air was so often smoky from marsh fires and burning strawstacks.

Often just the least nip in it that stimulated and invigorated you so that walking was never tiresome.

But our river friend in those days of early fall before the late rains came was almost at the end of his tether. Just barely enough water to carry along the fallen yellow leaves a little way, a slow, short, dignified ride till they piled up stranded in a sluggish eddy.

The spirit of the river was just resting and waiting, dreaming of the past spring rampage and of the coming rains that would revive him and restore him to his place as an integral part of our day.

I'm sure he refused to think of winter.

Looking forward to the coming of the first hard frosts and snow, we shared Dad's hope that the water level would be high enough before freeze-up so the river wouldn't freeze solid in its bed like a helpless mummy.

"A haze on the far horizon,
The infinite tender sky,
The ripe rich tint of the cornfields
And the wild geese sailing high,
All, all over upland and lowland
The charm of the golden rod,
Some of us call it autumn,
And others call it, God."

XIV

"See, winter comes to rule the varied year."

WINTER is a lovely time while the blood is warm and thick, when energy is boundless, in short — when you are young.

Almost as soon as my sister and I could walk we learned to skate.

In the warmth of the kitchen we'd get ready. Mufflers over our heads, crossed and tied at the back of our necks, or like sailors wear them — around our shoulders, crossed in front and tied at the waistline at the back; heavy hand-knit mitts on strings that ran up one sleeve and down the other, so many woolen things under our coats that we were almost as round as a butter-ball in outline.

To have really felt any fall we should have had to have been dropped from a roof, and even then would likely have bounced.

Clip on our skates, the spring kind that fitted any leather boot with a heel, put the straps so tight to support wobbly ankles that the circulation was practically cut off, and in no time at all our feet were just blocks of wood.

Slipping, sliding, clutching obliging branches, we'd finally get down the steep bank and out with a flourish on to the tiny swept square of ice.

Till we were able to keep ourselves in the position Nature intended us to assume when she supplied us with two legs, we made headway by pushing a kitchen chair ahead of us round and round the narrow space.

As long as snow didn't fall too often and too thickly, we'd keep the little ten by twelve sheet clean, but gradually its borders crept in.

Sometimes an overflow, an impatient gesture of the roped and tied Old Man River would send the water up through the water holes and bubbling through cracks, and there would be a new sheet of clear, rubbery ice.

Eventually the elements proved too much for us, and the novelty wore off and we gave up skating in the open.

Later, when Paradise built a rink, two sheets of curling ice in the centre and skating ice around the outside, we used to make the circle like animated scarecrows, bent almost double, arms and legs thrashing, ungraceful and awkward!

No one to tell us how to make the best of ourselves, but most of us as we grew up did develop into good strong skaters, and one of us "Minerva Belle," our "Minnie," was for ten consecutive years the female member of a skating team that held a provincial skating championship against all comers.

They were too good, and after ten years their entry was disallowed to give someone else a chance.

As soon as we mastered skating forward with a minimum of spills, we tried to teach ourselves to skate backwards.

No one thought of waltzing on ice to music, maybe because only on very special nights had we music of sorts.

We'd watch at the far end of the rink for a comparative lull in the stream of forward moving singles and doubles, then, facing the wall, we'd give ourselves a hefty push and out we would zip, keeping as close to the sides as possible.

One night Mother was there.

She and her partner, Bill, who owned one of the tin shops, were thoroughly enjoying themselves and putting on a good demonstration of the way they skated back east.

From side to side of the narrow rink they skated doing

the "outside edge" and the "Dutch roll" both backwards and forwards.

This particular round Mother was going backwards, and little "Iodine," after a violent shove from the wall was going backwards too, but in the opposite direction.

Our timing was perfect.

The apex of the angle just below where women wore bustles hit my Mother just below the bend of her knee.

I learned another lesson.

It's not so much the weight back of the attack, but the suddenness and unexpectedness that counts.

Down went Mother and Mr. Bill with most of the other skaters on top in a huddle. I was like the ball carrier in a rugby scrimmage, buried at the bottom of the heap, but after the unscrambling quite unhurt, only a bit short of breath.

Like swimming, skating, once learned, is never forgotten, at least you never forget how to go through the necessary motions.

I have gone back to skating several times in a burst of enthusiasm, buying complete new outfits of boots and skates, so as to be strictly up-to-date, but the ice seems now so far away and so desperately hard when it comes up and hits you. There are so many muscles that rebel at the unusual exercise, muscles that you didn't know you had years ago.

Even though I can soon get back to making the rounds alone, and more or less nonchalantly and rhythmically, the old thrilling swooping tang is gone, or going. It seems more discretionary to put my energies to better use, all things considered, by sitting playing bridge for exercise, like taking my swimming in the bath tub.

When the snow got too deep for skating on the river, we got out our sleighs.

It was strenuous work hauling them up the slippery bank, well iced by the daily water carrying. One brief

whoosh of flight down and half way up the opposite bank, then the long tiresome uphill pull again.

We thought it was worth while.

There was a bit of spice added to this sport by steering over the water hole, cut every morning, and always alive with darting long-legged black bugs.

Mother's patience must have often been sorely tried when, as would happen, we'd slip off the sleigh. We'd run howling up the path to declare we had fallen off our sleigh into the waterhole, just as if Old Man River had deliberately and maliciously put the waterhole in the only place we could slide, then reached out and pulled us in.

It wasn't deep enough to be dangerous, or wide enough to accommodate us with all our padding, but water is always wetting.

When winter really got down to business and tried to fill the river bed with snow to the level of the tops of the banks, we would become alpine climbers. As soon as the snow got well set, it was easy to climb the steeply sloping sides, digging toe holds all the way up.

It was far more risky and adventurous catapulting down.

If the sides were not too steep, we would lie down on our backs, wiggling our bodies well into the snow and moving our arms in a sweeping half circle, get up and repeat the process several times.

There was a frieze of "angels" decorating the dazzling bank of carrara.

Remember how you made angels in new fallen snow?

It was down the river too that I learned to smoke.

Mother was away down East with my sister who had been ill, (that was the time she had her hair cut), and I don't know if the trip was to recuperate from her illness or from having to have her hair cut.

Goldie came to stay with me to keep me company.

My Dad smoked cigars in those days, and there was always a boxful on the sideboard.

Goldie and I would cut a big fat cigar in two and go for a walk down the river to smoke it. I don't know why we went down the river, as we were just as much alone in the house. Maybe we thought we needed air while doing our stuff.

There were never any aftereffects with cigars, so I thought I'd try Dad's big old meerschaum next.

The sequel was to be expected, but none the less pitiful.

I lay on my Mother's bed, my face pale green, beads of moisture on my forehead and around my mouth, and I wondered if I'd ever see her again, and I tried to make up my mind what I would say to Father if he came home and wanted to know why I was at the point of death.

There were no retakes necessary on that.

When cigarettes are passed now and I refuse with, "No thank you, I never smoke," sometimes I have a fleeting glimpse of two young tykes strutting down the river smoking half cigars.

Many of the children whose homes were on the river, walked to and from school on the ice. It was more protected there and easier walking than on the deeply rutted roads.

All you needed to get the low-down on all the childish love affairs of the day was a walk down the river after a fresh fall of snow.

A boy too shy to do anything but yell insults at the girl of the moment, who turned him hot and cold inside and out, could find courage when no one was looking, to write with a stick on the snow A.B. loves C.D., and around it draw a heart-shaped outline. If he happened to have any scruples about blazoning his own love affairs to the world, he certainly had none about the heartthrobs of his thumbs.

A snow-slate was really good, because there was nothing final about the record. The first bit of wind and a new fall of snow and the page was ready for the next reigning favorite.

It was like writing on the sands of the sea shore.

Bridge rails weren't so good.

Initials cut laboriously into wood were irrevocable till laboriously cut out.

I remember once when May and I were out cycling, discovering cut deeply into the railing of Beatrice's bridge, "W.M. loves M.G." It was almost as thrilling as a first proposal, except for the element of uncertainty.

Was W.M. himself responsible for the job, or was someone else the culprit?

Naturally I assumed a righteous indignation, being brought up to believe something or other about the names of fools and faces being seen in public places. All the way home I hotly declared that I'd make a special trip out to that bridge with a good sharp knife and cut out the insult. Beside where it had been I would make my own declaration, "M.G. hates W.M."

Shakespeare was pretty wise.

Remember Hamlet and the wise-crack, "The lady doth protest too much, methink?"

I was no lady, but the shoe pinches. No act of mine would ever have blurred one letter of that graven flaunted boast.

My spiteful outburst was all hot air — just a bit of propaganda.

I hope if W.M. happens to read this and remembers, he won't be too terribly annoyed at this delayed recognition of the bridge engraving. It is the first time he has learned that I ever saw it and found out my reactions.

As a matter of fact, he won't be nearly so embarrassed as I was the day he came to school upstairs beside the undertaker's workshop in his first long pants — coarse navy blue serge, and a heavy red pullover turtle-necked sweater. I couldn't have been any more self-conscious if I had arrived there myself in a long dress and with my hair done up on top of my head.

Looking back so long ago, I can't keep back an odd giggle, everything was so orthodox. He sharpened my lead pencils and handed them back with a note on the point. I broke the lead or wore it blunt as often as I decently could pretend it was accidental, or in the course of work, and handed it back for resharpening and another note.

-Were you ever so silly and so proper?

You bet you were!

Goodbye and good luck Old Man White Mud. Those were happy days, and

"Happiness depends as Nature shows,
Less on exterior things than most suppose."

XV

"There's rosemary, that's for remembrance,
and there's pansies, that's for thoughts."

CHILDREN who, for various reasons, are not allowed to have pets are most unfortunate.

To be the proud, sole owner of a dog or a cat, a bird or a pony, and completely responsible for its well-being, does something more than develop pride of ownership.

To a degree it teaches a child kindness and consideration, engenders a sense of responsibility, and the pet itself repays a hundredfold for its care and keep.

I always had canaries at home.

I thought them mussy and a miserable nuisance, and resolved never to have birds when I had a home of my own unless there was a greenhouse where they could fly around — free.

My homes have never had a greenhouse, so I never have had a canary.

I like dogs, though I remember well only two, a black and white collie, and Rowdy.

The collie was many years earlier than Rowdy.

Once for several days he was missing, and when we discovered him he was hiding under the barn.

Do you remember part of King George V's Code of Living?

"If I am called upon to suffer, let me be like the well-bred beast, which goes away and suffers in silence."

Our collie had been caught in a bear trap, and when he came home it was on three legs.

He may have had no pedigree, but he was well-bred for all that.

Rowdy, you know about — poor Rowdy whose sporting blood led him off the deep end.

I liked cats too, or at least I liked kittens. There were always cats in the barn, but they had no sense whatever and no matter how young, they were always getting into trouble. They knew nothing about the proprieties of birth-control, and we could always tell when a wholesale drowning had to be undertaken.

Off and on, we kept a cow that had to put up with some pretty amateurish milking, but you can't call a cow in a stable a pet, though you might if she lived in a pasture.

We always had horses too, mostly for driving, not riding, but they were too big and frisky for pets.

Then, on a night of nights, Jess came into my life and was added to our stock parade.

Bedtime was early for us, much too early we thought, but Mother worked on the theory that one hour's sleep before twelve was better than three hours after. We hated the old "Early to bed and early to rise" proverb.

Slept-out sometimes, and thoroughly awake before things were moving in the house I'd slip out of bed and stand at my window looking out over the lawn I'd cut by continents in the daytime, now an unfamiliar, ghostly place.

Except for the sleepy twittering of birds I couldn't see, and the rustling of leaves on the vine around the window, it was all hushed, shadowy, churchy.

Like Old Man River in the summer, all outdoors seemed to be holding its breath, listening and waiting like it did before a storm.

Nothing looked at all the same as in the daytime. Everything was different, and yet in an unexplained mysterious way lovely and gripping, even to a youngster who perhaps at that moment felt sorrier than ever for some mis-

demeanor of yesterday that sent her sobbing to school, because Mother wouldn't take her part in the regular routine of a goodbye kiss.

Big people get that feeling too when they have been bad and they think too long about it, a longing and a loneliness. Ministers say it has something to do with our self-conscious. I wouldn't know, but little and big I have been there.

In fact, one time the sensation persisted so strongly that I was sure I had a call to be a missionary — a foreign missionary, of course. This conclusion may have been helped by the fact that a schoolgirl friend of Mother's, Margaret McKellar, was a missionary in India.

It sounded adventurous and interesting.

I used to make bundles of my Sunday school leaflets and picture cards and send them to her for the poor little heathen.

I never knew if any of these packages ever reached the young Indians.

If they did I hope they enjoyed the realistic colored illustrations of Daniel placidly reading his Bible while the lions looked on abashed; Cain finishing off his brother Abel; Elijah sailing off to heaven in a chariot of fire, drawn by wild white horses, and all the other gaudy representations of bible stories.

Only very unusual happenings would ever warrant disturbing us at night, and one of these rare occasions was when I became a stockowner because of Jess.

Late one Saturday night my Father came home from the store leading a pony.

He was considerate enough not to put her out of sight in the stable, but instead tied her to a wheel of the buggy in the yard. Then he came into the house and called upstairs to me to look out the little back window on the landing.

Peering out, there in the bright moonlight, I saw a

"windigo," a spirit pony that I could hardly believe was flesh and blood, and my very own.

In the hall downstairs lay a smart buff leather English sidesaddle and bridle, and a thin silver-mounted riding whip with a leather wrist loop.

That was one of the nights I'm sure I thought would never end.

Waking at the usual time I must have had that feeling that today something wonderful was going to happen, without at first realizing just what it was.

Then I remembered and I know my fingers fumbled so that it took longer than usual to get into my endless clothes. Over my head with my shirt (if you had a shirt you wore it) button one or two buttons on my Ferris waist to hold me together on this day of days, fasten to it the starched frilled cotton "drawers," that no amount of crying and coaxing ever moved my Mother into letting us get into before May 24th.

The long-sleeved, long-legged bumphly woolen combinations we wore in winter were a frequent cause of my scorching outbursts of temper. They made you prickle and itch so.

I'm sure any child psychologist today would, in my case, have had no difficulty in diagnosing these lurid spasms of mine and of suggesting the cure of "no woolen combinations ever."

I'm equally certain no snake, when it shed its winter skin, ever felt so grand and bare and free as I did when those woolies and heavy stockings were shed on May 24th. Mother made that much concession on "ne'er change a clout till May be oot."

The filmy "bras" and "step-ins" of silk, satin or chiffon, the skimpy, lacy slip, total backing of winter and summer dresses of my young daughters would have been unbelievable to my Mother. Besides being positively indecent

getting so near to Nature, tuberculosis or pneumonia was just waiting to grab you off.

Undies were underwear — no fooling — and they were intended to last.

Bena always said one of the humiliating nightmares of her young days was when she was invited out to spend the night at some of her chums' homes, usually an exciting treat, and quite perfect except for one thing. When she undressed at night she could not hide the fact that petticoat, drawers and nightie all had blazoned across them, faint but unmistakable, "Five Roses Flour."

Her dad had the agency for this particular brand, and as a lot of it was sold in smaller quantities than one-hundred pound bags, there were always lots of sacks for petticoats, underwear, pillowcases, sheets, dish and hand towels.

Cheerio! Bena and Maggie.

Heavens! I have left Jess waiting for a long time, but my stockings are on, suspenders fastened. On with one petticoat, feet into boots, and grabbing a dress and fastening it on the run downstairs, I'm out the banging door, and metaphorically speaking, in heaven.

Jess was lightish brown, about the same color as Rowdy with a narrow black stripe down her back. She was used to children and took my enthusiastic attentions as a matter of course, nibbled graciously at the handful of grass I offered her and let me stroke her velvet nose.

There was only one condition imposed on me in the gift of Jess, a condition which should always be stressed in gifts of pets where at all possible. It was to be distinctly understood that she was my sole charge. Mine it was to measure her oats, to throw down the hay from the loft to feed and to bed, mine to take her down to the river or the river up to her. Mine to curry her and keep her stall clean. This last task wasn't insisted on, but I didn't mind it greatly. It made me feel competent and efficient as I

scraped and heaved out of the little back window of the stable.

Perfect, utterly heavenly days, when I bridled and saddled Jess, tightening as best I could the bands of striped webbing around her fat "tummy," bracing myself with a foot against her side as I saw the men do, and trying to reach the right hole in the strap. Sometimes after a short canter these girths would have loosened so I'd have to jump off and have another go at tightening them.

Once I didn't get off soon enough. The saddle slipped around dumping me on the bare ground. There was no pommel, and with your right leg draped over the hook on the left side of the saddle you were rather handicapped when the saddle slipped and caught you off balance.

I used to try riding astride but there wasn't a stirrup on the right side, and besides, after a few miles you felt all numb and dislocated and wondered if you'd ever walk again as usual.

This time Jess never even hesitated. She must have had her mind made up what she would do if the chance ever came. She turned on the proverbial dime and was off home.

I have heard of a horse laugh, and if that goes for ponies too, Jess must have been laughing out loud.

I sat on the ground and watched her loping over the prairie, rains and stirrup flippety-flopping, mane and tail streaming in the breeze, and I wasn't laughing.

It was a long walk home.

No matter how lovely the day I didn't enjoy it. I couldn't see the flowers nor the berries for tears, and I kept wondering how they would feel at home when Jess came in riderless, and the pictured me lying somewhere out on the prairie with a broken arm or leg or even neck.

No one saw her arrive and she went alone into her familiar stall.

One other time she almost repeated this performance. She stepped into a gopher hole in a run over the open

prairie, and I sailed over her head all in one motion. Fortunately when I landed the reins were still in my hand. She had no chance to run, had just to stand with her head down and listen to her pedigree from me.

I was rather short of the right words.

Usually I went alone, scampering away in the general direction of where the cow was taken to pasture in the morning. Not too happy though when I found her, as I had to match her doddering saunter, cussing her physical inability to match Jess's easy rocking-chair gait. If I got a bit impatient and sent her swinging clumsily ahead, they always knew at home when milking time came. How, I don't know — just instinct likely.

Children are naturally gregarious, and riding alone wasn't as much fun as in company. Sometimes Uncle Bill's new wife went with me. Sometimes I would pick up one of my playmates, fold up grandmother's big shawl into a pad and tie it on Jess's back behind the saddle, and off we would go.

It was on one of these rides with Goldie on behind that the old shawl took French leave. Jess may have resented the double load. We weren't too heavy, but her back wasn't very long, so Goldie sat mostly on her hips—Jess's hips. This may have interfered with the usually pleasant canter. Anyway, the persistent bumping up and down loosened the ties, and all of a sudden Goldie was riding bareback, but being pretty numb by this time she didn't miss the shawl until too late. We never could have retraced Jess's steps.

Sometimes Fan, on big white Paddy, joined us. There was much more room on Paddy's broad back for an extra rider.

The five of us explored the countryside, went through the cemetery to find out who had died lately, and tried to arrive at the different farm homes near meal time.

Never was food denied to anyone, and we, whose families

were well known, even if we weren't, got the best there was. Fresh homemade bread and buns, wild strawberry jam, pincherry jelly — there's food for the gods.

At one of these little farm homes there lived a lady who had come out from England to visit her sister. She married and settled down on a farm, too. In the big diningroom-livingroom, was a small piano, and as an added treat while we ate our pieces of bread and jam, the lady would sing for us, usually "The little old umbrella," (she called it "umbrilla") smiling and nodding and the black ribbon on her glasses bobbing.

You cannot hear my "Thank you again," little umbrilla lady, but it is heartfelt.

Uncle Bill and I sometimes went riding on Sunday out to where they were feeding a lot of cattle. I was very proud on these occasions.

On one such trip Uncle Bill dismounted to open the gate into the pasture and as I went through he cut Jess over her fat hips with his whip, an indignity which she promptly resented. He wanted to see how well I could stick on, but he was more scared than I when he caught up with us.

My sister wasn't interested in riding, but she did try it once, and was almost decapitated. She got on all right and was so busy fixing her skirt or getting her boot comfortably fixed in the stirrup, that she forgot to do anything with the reins. Jess walked quietly over to the clotheslines, perhaps with the deliberate intention of brushing my sister off. A wire line caught her under the chin, and she had had enough.

Some people are sufficiently wise to know when they have had enough.

Jess was not young when first she came to me. After three or four years she was given to a farmer who promised she could end her days in idleness and comfort in his pasture.

Long, long ago she really became a "windigo," and I

hope as she canters around the spirit world unhampered with bridle or saddle, she is as happy as she made me in *my* paradise.

"All the loveliest things there be
come simply, so it seems to me."



WINNIE AND MAGGIE

XVI

"Bliss was it in that day to be alive,
But to be young, was very heaven."

MANY years before I saw the first gasoline-driven motorcar in Winnipeg I learned to ride a bicycle. The first bicycle in Paradise belonged to an English gentleman, and when he was mounted on the saddle by the help of a fence or something equally adapted to reaching the high seat, he looked very awesome, haughty and standoffish.

My out-of-date dictionary says a bicycle is a "two-wheeled velocipede, especially one having a very large front wheel, above which is the seat for the rider, and one quite small wheel following behind. It is propelled by the action of the feet upon cranks attached to the axle of the large wheel, and can be driven at great speed."

That was our English friend's bicycle exactly — with the reservation that I don't think it ever merited the distinction of "great speed." Perhaps, however, that wasn't the fault of the machine or the rider, but of the lack of a proper speedway at Paradise.

I know I was never privileged to mount its lofty seat. My feet would not have reached the cranks or pedals, and instant action was necessary for balance once you moved from the starting post. If I had ever been up even on the Q.T. it must have remained as a clear recollection of an adventure. I have no such recollection so Q.E.D. Perhaps the bike was tabled in the kitchen just to keep it inviolate.

Like most of the children in Paradise, both boys and girls, I learned to ride on "the old boneshaker."

This almost prehistoric machine was the feminine counterpart of the big-wheeled one. It belonged to a Miss Johnston who had come out from Scotland and had taken on the job of teaching the young hopefuls in one of the small country schools of the district. There wasn't much chance for cycling on the dirt trails, so she left the boneshaker in town at one of the hardwares where it was rented by the hour or the day to all and sundry who thirsted for knowledge in this new mode of locomotion.

It was scaled down a lot from the Englishman's bicycle, being for the weaker sex, had solid rubber tires and wide-spreading handle bars, with an enormous hand brake for use if and when you gained "great speed." Altogether it was a heavy, lumbering contraption that menaced your bones when it fell on you.

"Donnty" was a great friend of my friends in the country, Winnie, Maggie, Eva and Annie, and often spent the weekend at their farm home.

That was when we had our innings, and for nothing had the use of the old bike, taking turns walking and riding along the dusty roads.

On one of these Saturdays we had gone too far in our enthusiasm and darkness seemed to come with no warning at all.

Always I was warned to be home before dark, as it was a lonely mile into town for a small girl alone.

That was one time I ran in dead earnest, and being long-legged above average it was one thing I could do rather well. I wasn't afraid of anything on the road. I might have been, but just then there was room for only one fear — that the store would be closed and my Father gone home to discover my defection. I forgot I was tired after a long day's play. I ran and ran and ran until my

heart felt as if it would burst, and every breath seemed absolutely the last I could manage to gasp out.

The relief when I got near enough to see the store lights over the rise of the bridge — no neon signs, just the lights from the coal oil lamps. Even then I wasn't sure that it mightn't be closing time, and I simply had to beat Father home. There would be less difficulty explaining to Mother.

It was an anticlimax but still an enormous relief when I dashed into the kitchen and saw the hands of the clock on the shelf said half past seven.

Once having learned to ride a bicycle there was no peace in our house. The boneshaker was a back number and had lost all its appeal.

Life is like that.

What thrilled you yesterday you can't tolerate today.

My Dad bought my sister and me each a bicycle, dividing the business between the two agencies in town.

My sister drew a Massey-Harris and I got a Cleveland with pert butterfly handles.

With other lucky girls we went riding after school or in the evening, and a quite accidental meeting-up with two or three of the boys who had bicycles too, usually resulted.

As in the days when horseback riding was our hobby, we spent whole days Saturdays and during summer holidays in the country, usually timing our arrival at a farm when hungry.

Sometimes we took our lunch along — hard-boiled eggs, salmon sandwiches that were anything but dainty, jam and honey pieces, and sat beside the road or on a gate while we cleaned up every crumb.

As I watch the girls go by on bicycles now, in slacks and halters, and wedgies, hatless or with a handkerchief tied over their heads and under their chins, I can't help but think back to our ultra-modern outfits — silly sailor hats tipped down over our eyes because of a deep buckram-lined velvet band at the back, mosquito veils all around.

I don't know why we were supposed to be more susceptible to flies and mosquitoes cycling than walking, but remember how we swathed ourselves in auto veils when motoring became the fashion among plutocrats? We tied our hats on and our hair in and protected our delicate complexions from sun and wind as we tore along at twenty-five miles an hour in our own gas buggy.

Full cotton blouses with high collars were anchored around our waists with tapes, on which were two rows of steel spikes—one to hold your blouse down, the other to hold your skirt up. If you didn't have one of these new inventions, you pinned yourself together with a long black-headed pin that scratched the chair backs and jabbed anyone who happened to be careless.

I don't know why a lot of the boy friends didn't develop blood poisoning, but it was likely all in knowing how to keep on the right side of the pin.

Skirts had a huge inverted pleat at the back to accommodate the saddle, and hung down well past the knees, where they met up with the high canvas-topped laced and hooked boots worn.

Legs were still kept from the public gaze as much as possible and were never mentioned in mixed company.

The hooks on our boots, like boys had on theirs, were a concession to the need for hurry in getting out of them.

Small feet and ankles being, as it were, a sign of breeding, were more or less obligatory. Ankles must not have a chance to thicken, so lace them tightly. As for feet, I'm surprised we grew up anything but clubfooted. The foot-binding Chinese had nothing on us, and there were no sliding rules to tell when you fibbed about the size you should be wearing. No AAAA's, no AA's even, just widths that fitted anybody and everybody.

When I was old enough to be consulted, I'd smile guilelessly at the clerk and insist "It doesn't hurt a bit,"

and hope that after the breaking-in process, I'd be able to walk again in comfort.

One pair of brown and white Shepherd's check canvas bicycle boots I had were so tight that the soles showed hardly any signs of wear when the tops were worn out. Walking was not necessary with my Cleveland, but also it wasn't possible.

In recent years, with the return of popularity of the bicycle, I have often wanted to try riding one again. It would have been a grand way to tour the continent. But my pride never would let me risk making a spectacle of myself, and I lacked the courage to consider falls.

Cycling, with swimming and skating and horseback riding, is definitely a thing of the past for good and all.*

"The time God allows to each one of us is like a precious tissue; which we embroider as we best know how."

*(September, 1942—"Cycling . . . definitely a thing of the past for good and all." I believed that when I wrote it, but it is not true any longer. I couldn't let well enough alone. I swallowed my pride and made a spectacle of myself, at first coming off decidedly the worse for wear in a contest with trees and stones. But I got the hang of it again. When I tackle horses, I'll take out an accident policy first.")

XVII

"From our own selves our joys must flow,
and that dear hut, our home."

WILL you come and spend a summer's day with us at our house?

Come in time for breakfast and bring along with you a good old-fashioned hunger, for "'Tis not the meat but 'tis the appetite makes eating a delight," though I can promise you you won't find fault with the meat either.

I'm sorry for and yet a little envious of people who are never hungry. I'd like either a little less appetite or a little more will power.

My sister and I are ahead of you, washed, hair in a topknot or in a ribbon-tied pigtail or held back in place with a circular comb.

You get the seat of honor on Father's right, where your plate is handy for little extra specials. As a matter of fact, Father won't be there for breakfast — he'll be off to the store, but that's your place for dinner and supper.

What a breakfast!

A sip of orange or any other kind of juice, dry melba toast and black coffee?

Again, no! a thousand times no!

For one thing, there were no handy canned juices, no ready-made flimsy bits of nothing for cereal.

We had never heard of vitamins A, B, C, D, X, Y, Z, and there were no such miserable pests as calories.

We were always hungry then — or almost always.

If we couldn't eat this and didn't want that, we knew a good dose of something awful wouldn't be long in being forcibly administered.

If we couldn't eat, we *must* be sick. There was no other alternative.

If we did accept a helping of anything it was eaten to the last speck. It wasn't considered the right thing to leave something of everything on your plate — not in our home, anyway.

This doctrine of the clean plate was so thoroughly drilled into us as children that to this day my friends declare you can tell my plate when it goes to the kitchen because only the pattern remains.

I don't like to claim that we were particularly guileless, and I hate to admit we were dumb, though it looks like it.

Maybe it was because our kitchen table — a plain deal — had no ledge underneath, that we struggled through to the last bite.

My children have confided in me (trying to bring them up on the same principle), that they used to park what they didn't like or couldn't eat on the ledge under our dining-room table, remove it as opportunity offered, or wait till the dog helped out.

There must have been something wrong with my technique. Carrots and peas and onions are naturally not parked now under the table, but are left completely ignored on the side of the plate, an adult version of a childhood ruse.

This same dumbness or lack of ingenuity (that sounds kinder) on my part continued in spasms through college days, and on one occasion nearly proved my undoing.

This night for supper at our boardinghouse we had pancakes, which we all were fond of.

Eva issued a challenge to me.

She could eat more pancakes than I could, so she said.

She was smaller than I, and besides I never had sense enough to refuse a dare.

This looked easy.

The other boarders took sides and cheered us on.

We begged smaller and thinner pancakes.

After all these years I don't remember who was declared the winner.

Likely innocent little Eva suggested an armistice or something to call the contest off; maybe supplies from the kitchen were cut off.

Next day, however, there wasn't a shred of doubt as to who had won when Eva admitted a large part of her pancakes was squashed on the ledge under the table.

I had been much too preoccupied with the business in hand to watch her carefully. There was no impartial referee.

Besides, I would never have believe little Eva would be guilty of such a breach of the rules, such duplicity. It just wasn't cricket.

Porridge is lifted, so come on.

Every day of the year, and every year, a potful of good porridge, fine, standard or rolled oats, or cracked wheat, bubbled on the kitchen stove.

We used to make a special trip to the mill to choose at what stage of the milling we wanted oats and wheat.

A plateful of porridge with cream and brown sugar, or if a storm had turned the cream during the night, with golden syrup and butter seeping out of a little lake in the centre is a mighty good starter for the day.

Most Scottish people consider sugar on porridge is a sacrilege — it is a pudding then and not the backbone of a meal, and who wants to begin the morning with a pudding? But my Dad liked sugar on porridge that had been well salted.

On Sunday morning when he got breakfast, he always saw to it that there were lots of "knots" in it — that is, he

poured the meal in so fast that lumps formed which were dry meal in the centre.

He liked cream too, but if he could get fresh sweet buttermilk with little flecks of butter floating around in it, that was his choice. He would tell us that at home in Scotland he had often seen porridge eaten with beer instead of milk to wash it down, though he had never tried it. It must have been so, for my Father never kidded.

Porridge finished to the last sweet spoonful, on comes a plateful of hot buttered toast — toast made over the coals of a wood fire that beats an electric toaster all hollow, a platter of home cured (not ours) bacon, or ham and eggs, and (should I blush to admit it?) a big dishful of golden-brown fried potatoes, jam, marmalade or honey and coffee — not percolator, not silex nor dripolator coffee, but coffee made with a whole raw egg beaten into the grounds and served with cream and sugar.

If your stomach is sort of wishy-washy in the morning, your appetite nil and your digestion only fair, I can almost see you shudder at the thought of fried potatoes for breakfast.

I feel a little better about my own leanings, and have an extra reason for liking our own western Canadian poetess Edna Jacques, other than for her homey poetry, since I read in the papers that at a recent lecture in Winnipeg she had the courage to confess that she always knew she had reached home again in her own ranching west, when she was served fried potatoes for breakfast.

Think of that! A boundary line between east and west, not of parallels of latitude, not of rivers and mountains, but of fried potatoes for breakfast.

Maybe in our breakfasts at Paradise there was complete disregard for balance, for what's what for anyone not out digging ditches. Maybe it is common and shows a lack of breeding to thoroughly enjoy good plain honest food. But to this day if I gave way to my innermost cravings, from

all the lengthy menu of the smartest hotel, I'd choose for my breakfast, hot buttered toast, ham and potatoes fried in butter or bacon fat, and coffee.

Several years ago on a motor trip in the Rockies we camped one night at Field. It was cold and wet, and fog hung down all around, nearly hiding the mountains. We strung blankets on two sides of the open camp kitchen while we ate steak and mushrooms and swigged hot tea, then crawled shivering into the beds of our trailer.

It rained and blew all night, and in the morning as we pulled on damp clothes, we just couldn't face the thought of the camp kitchen again for breakfast.

Sometimes the wind really is tempered for the shorn lamb.

We were camped close by a big construction outfit, and this gave the man-of-the-party a bright idea.

Knowing the ropes a little, having served an apprenticeship on survey gangs, he sauntered over to the outfit's kitchen and was greeted with "Hey Bo! Want something to eat?"

The man-of-the-party, feeling a little like the Scotchman who took his brother to the party for fear he couldn't eat enough himself, admitted he would like breakfast for himself and for three hungry women.

Breakfast was long over, lunch was on the stove cooking, but several internal applications out of a "Gordon's" bottle to the cooks, and the camp was ours.

It was just like old times in Paradise, only more so. Porridge, ham and eggs, toast, buns, jam, canned fruit, cakes, doughnuts, pie and — yes, you have guessed it, dishes of fried potatoes and thick mugs of good coffee.

The pie and cake went us one better, but they were catering to day laborers and uncounted hoboos who jumped off the trains before they got into Field.

It was a Dominion Government camp, not a private contractor's, so supplies were plentiful. It was the first

time three women had landed in for breakfast and the best was none too good.

They did themselves proud and we had a grand meal at Government expense, and not one single complaint to offer then or ever at the kind, the quality or the quantity of the food.

Sunday breakfast was the only one of the week that varied in essentials in our house.

As I have said, Father prepared it. Sunday is supposed to be a day of rest, and rest is sometimes just as complete with a change of routine as with no work. On winter Sundays, after porridge, we had salt codfish with buttery hard-boiled egg sauce or kidney stew prepared the day before, and just reheated.

The old saying that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach is rather humiliating, but I'm afraid true. In this day of diets for this and diets for that, we are all familiar with the fits of despondency or downright bad temper in ourselves or others when the pangs of hunger upset our equilibrium. It's fatal to ask a favor of a hungry man (or woman), but after a satisfying tasty meal almost anything is possible.

If we are in one of those restful periods between hired girls, you'll likely want to help Mother with the dishes and straightening up the kitchen. No hired girl—no formality. Then the bedrooms, with a lick and a promise to the rest of the house, which never seemed to get very untidy.

Afterwards maybe you'll enjoy going out into the garden and helping pick the vegetables for dinner and supper.

All the makings of a salad are there and always "prime," as several crops of the early vegetables are planted in succession.

Maybe you would like to wander up and down the tall rows of early corn, picking this ear, passing up that one as not quite ready after a tiny peek through the covering husks.

If you wish fresh green peas, you can pick from the outside of the rows while I get down on hands and knees and crawl down the centre of an arch made with willow stakes on which we trained the vines. The juiciest peas you ever ate, the tenderest pods, not too thin, not too full, but just right, hung down thickly inside the arch in the shade. The only pods, the only peas you will ever see to match them, are on the colored wrappers of canned store peas. They are far more than we are able to use in our house, so have a good time, and remember — they are perfect, raw.

It may not be worthwhile as far as money and effort go, to be bothered with a vegetable garden. It takes space too, and you can buy most things at your kitchen door fresh and good, but I can't help thinking that a child has missed something worthwhile who doesn't know at first hand the difference between the little round radish leaves and the first narrow carrot leaves, between the folded twin leaves of peas and the stubby tough-looking beans, both in such a hurry to grow up that they often carry their seed husk up into the air with them.

The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth,
One is nearer God's heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth."

After the vegetables are picked, we'll sit out under the trees at the back door while we prepare them for dinner, listening to the song of the birds. There's always the soft cooing of a pair of wood doves, and for many years a one-legged tame black bird, and always the noisy inquisitive red squirrels.

If it happens to be Monday that you came to spend the day with us, when we have finished getting the vegetables ready and while dinner is cooking, let us go and visit Little-French-Mary busy at the washtub under the trees.

Fat, funny Little-French-Mary could have inspired one of our first drawing attempts in the little black school-house.

Remember?

One small circle (with two AA's for ears), on top of a big circle with a dragging line and you had a rear view of a cat. Three graduated circles, one on top of the other, the lowest slightly flattened at the base where you stuck on legs and club feet that headed sideways, with a few extras like eyes and mouth, straggly hair and arms, and presto! you had a woman on your slate. If the hair was short and legs grew from the second circle, it was a man.

Surrealist art with a vengeance.

Little-French-Mary's full print skirt hanging down over her roly-polly hips stands out like a partly opened umbrella. She is bent almost double over the tub; in fact you think there are grave possibilities of her over-balancing and going black-haired head first into the deep snowy suds.

Squaws were always prodigal in their use of soap, so the tub is brimming with a bubbly foam that makes you pine to run for your clay pipe and go on a bubble bust.

Rub, scrub, plunk into the water, on with another glob of soap, up and down, up and down the board, an inspection or two, a practiced twist and into the basket for small things which never disappeared mysteriously. Big things, like sheets and spreads and table cloths, she had to wrestle with a bit, holding one end in her strong teeth.

How she laughs and shakes all over her three circles as she gestures and jabbars, in what might as well be Greek for all you could understand.

Noon meal was dinner, and for the meat course we're going to have a potpie today. Deep iron pot filled with alternate layers of thinly sliced potatoes, onions and pieces of round steak, well seasoned and barely covered with cold water, simmers now at the back of the stove. No stirring please to break the potato slices! About a quarter to twelve Mother tosses together a soft biscuit dough, not too rich, which she lays in one piece on the top of the pie, then on with an iron close-fitting lid, and on top of this heaps

up red-hot coals. One supply of coals is usually enough to put a delicate brown crust on the tenderest biscuit you could ever bite into.

This is still a favorite recipe of mine, only I cut my biscuit dough into little biscuits and pop the whole container (not iron either) into the oven to brown. Mother thought this was an improvement on hers and her Mother's way, but its only advantage is that it is easier, and of course I have no coals.

There isn't apt to be dessert if you weren't here. Dessert was very secondary to the real meal. However, today we have lemon pie, and if you ever taste another quite as delicious you are luckier than I. Filling soft, yet firm enough to stand up when cut, clear with little flecks of rind in it, no sparing of butter and lemons, and over all a deep snowdrift of meringue, the uneven swoops of it pale gold.

After dinner we'll walk a mile west of town to visit Beatrice's mother. While you grownups talk, Beatrice will let us play with her funny all-wooden dutch doll with the pointed blue wooden shoes, or we'll go out to the swing or into the big farmyard and hunt for mushrooms. If Dunc is around he'll show us anything new and interesting. Delicious homemade things to eat, and tea, and then off home again, about the time people set out to call nowadays, walking beside the road out of the dusty ruts, stepping aside to pick crocuses or roses or orange lilies.

Beatrice's mother was to me the living image of Queen Victoria. She wasn't very tall and she was pretty plump. She wore her dark hair parted in the centre of her head and drawn smoothly and tightly down to a little bun at the back — not a wave, not a tiny curl anywhere. Her face was young and smooth and unlined, and her complexion fresh pink and white. Plain full black skirt and plain bodice with white touches of real lace at neck and waist, and when she drove out a black bonnet tied under her chin with wide satin ribbons. She went to and from church in a phaeton

just like the Queen's with low steps that barely cleared the ground, side lamps and mud guards that ran from the front wheels right up and over the back wheels. The pony in the shafts was fat and elderly and jogged along at a dignified, fitting pace.

No one else in Paradise boasted such a stylish carriage. Ours was fairly special — square flat top, edged with long fringe, carriage lamps that I never saw lighted, and the horse or horses in summer sporting coarse mosquito nets, buff-colored, but just like the black ones the horses wore that pulled the makeshift hearse. It wasn't as snappy as a phaeton.

When Mother and Dad went driving they both wore long close-fitting linen dusters, and carefully tucked around their knees a linen lap robe worked with great purple woolen bunches of grapes and green leaves. If my sister or I went along, we sat on one of the little stools with the needlepoint tops from the parlor.

Our supper is always early, and tonight we are going to have flat meat pie — fresh steak minced fine, made nice and juicy and well seasoned and baked like an ordinary double-crust pie, and roast potatoes (I hope you like the skins too), pickles, Spanish bun and maybe fresh wild raspberries with lots of cream.

Meat at two meals I suppose is all wrong, but you'll enjoy your supper as much as your dinner for all that.

If it's Wednesday, we'll go to prayer meeting.

Other nights we'll play croquinoie or Fort or Euchre or get out the stereoscope and pictures. We may even take you wading through the family album to show you the latest additions to the line-up. —

If it is Saturday you won't stay very long because we have to have our baths — a ritual celebrated in the kitchen in a washtub in front of the stove. There wouldn't have been any point to the radio joke; no loud laugh then about

the hotel guest who wouldn't bathe because it wasn't Saturday night.

This regular bath routine had one interesting break for me.

One day — not Saturday — I met our doctor's wife downtown and she told me they were installing a bathtub upstairs and I could go and have a bath anytime I felt the urge.

My Dad used to take my sister and me into Winnipeg when he went on buying trips, one at a time. We always stayed at the Leland and the floor maids combed and fixed our hair which was the only thing that stumped my Dad when he dressed us. So you see I knew all about bathtubs, but this was the very first in a home in Paradise, and I felt terribly honored and pleased to be invited to try it out.

Home I went on the run to ask Mother's permission — and back again.

There it was, a tin bathtub built in against the wall with little narrow boards, and taps. The cold water was pumped up to a high tank by a force pump and I suppose the hot water ran through the kitchen stove.

I don't remember that I ever repeated the treat.

Sometimes it is better to have just one very special memory.

I hope you have enjoyed your day at our house; we have enjoyed having you.

"The home we first knew on this beautiful earth,
The friends of our childhood, the place of our birth,
In the heart's inner chamber sung always will be
As the shell ever sings of its home in the sea."

XVIII

"School days, school days,
Dear old golden-rule days!"

RIGHT on the heels of the first settlers came the first log churches and schools.

Religious and educational needs of the new settlements were recognized as vitally important.

A place to worship and a place where their children might learn their A.B.C's were most necessary links to the civilization left behind, and props to the new civilization they were building.

Often some central home housed both church and school until there was time to raise a special building, which might still serve the double purpose.

For such community enterprises, usually a bee was organized. On a certain day all who hoped to benefit or were interested altruistically, took their individual share of responsibility for the common good. Labor and materials were gladly contributed.

Bees, too, were usual, if a farm home were burnt, or if sickness interrupted the farming routine of some neighbor.

Work done alone and for yourself is often monotonous and dull drudgery, but work done in friendly co-operation is never tiresome. House-raising bees, ploughing bees, or harvesting bees, and inside the house quilting and mat-making bees were a welcome break in the daily round, a pleasant sociable cheery gathering of people whose interests were mutual.

There were no kindergartens then to take the children out of a busy mother's way, and keep them happy and interested for a few hours each day, to accustom them gradually to being away from Mother and to sit still for some consecutive minutes.

There were, however, fewer children, and so they began school younger than now when accommodation is often out of line with the need of it.

Most of us began school regularly when we were five years old, but even before five the treat of being visitors on Friday afternoons was permitted. It was a treat for everyone concerned — except maybe the teacher who had to "grin and bear it," — for the little visitor, for the proud youngster who brought the visitor all dressed up in Sunday best, even if only one of the family, and for all the other pupils who flocked around.

Friday afternoon tradition is still carried on.

Several different buildings housed the school at Paradise before I learned anything at first hand of such weighty matters as slates and slate pencils.

Quite definitely I don't remember my first days in the school we called the little black schoolhouse. Why the "black" I don't know, unless because the logs were badly weathered and the customary odd whitewashing may have been overlooked.

Built in 1879, by 1891 it was too small to hold the increasing youthful population, so away it went.

That is my first memory of it, being jacked up and dragged away on rollers, leaving us children rooting around in the dust like a lot of busy chickens, for slate pencils, rubbers, rulers and marbles that we had poked down knotholes in the floor.

The new one that replaced the little black school was still one-roomed, built of lumber, not logs, and was ready after summer holidays were over.

Some years later it was again too small, and a mate to it



(Standing) Maggie, Lizzie, Lou, Bella, Nina, Fannie, Maggie.

(Sitting) Nellie, Eva, Maggie, Justina, Minnie.

Summer of 1889



My Sister

Maybe 1890. Looks like part of the cast of Madame Butterfly.

My Mother

was built on the same lot, and the more advanced pupils — the higher books (not grades)—were transferred.

These two schools were just like any country school today, with the essentials of blackboard, desks, seats, stove, teacher's table, but no trimmings.

The pupils too were just average, ordinary country-school children, good and bad, dull and bright.

The boys dipped your braids in the inkwells, untied your ribbons, jabbed your shins or where you sat down with pins stuck in the toe of their boots, put little dead garter snakes or live toads in your desk, or let an odd gopher loose from their pocket when school was in. In winter they carried pocketfuls of snow in to toss around or tuck down your neck when teacher wasn't looking. In spring they pockmarked the ceiling with mud picked off their boots, rolled into little balls well lubricated with spit and flipped off the end of a ruler to stick on the ceiling like a modern water sprinkler system.

The girls were patterned alike in frilled, starched cotton "pinnys" and cotton half sleeves, hair in knobs on the top of their heads or braided into two side braids (Y-ing into a single braid if your hair were thin and straggling.) Mine never did achieve the two braids my sister wore. Circular and side combs, steel and celluloid, came much later.

We all used slates and slate pencils, ruling heavy white lines for our first graphic attempts — pothooks and circles. Later we got adept at making the dotted lines by holding our pencil at an angle of 45° and pushing it instead of pulling it across the slate. The resulting screech set your teeth on edge. We were well along the highway of knowledge when we were permitted to use lined scribblers and lead pencils, and practically graduates when we knew anything about pen and ink.

When one side of your slate was filled, you turned it over, and when that too had reached its limitations or had

received teacher's C or X, a little spit and a vigorous application of the palm of your hand and it was ready for use again.

Sometimes a hygienic wave swept the girl pupils, and water bottles, cloth over the top in which you poked a little hole, and a bit of sponge or rag ousted good old spit and palm.

If you were rather plucky your wooden slate-frame was bound with red or blue felt to make it as noiseless as possible. The ultimate, however, was a double slate, two slates bound and laced or hinged on one side. The only advantage of a double slate was you could keep the inside inviolable.

There was no playground equipment — no swings, no teeter-totters, no trapeze bars to "skin the cat on" and, because we never had them, we never missed them.

If any youngster had a baseball or a football and were public-spirited enough to take them to school, the boys took possession of the back lots.

We skipped endless miles, played hopscotch on the bare ground, and pump-pump-pull-away from the school wall to the fence. We "cracked the whip" with the usual disastrous happenings to the little tailenders. We made dandelion and daisy chains and big green burr furniture, we played hide-and-seek around the long woodpiles, the "little houses" and in the silver willow scrub and poplars across the road.

The spicy pungent fragrance of the little clovelike yellow blossoms of the wolf or silver-willow always tosses me back across the years and the miles to school in Paradise again.

Funny thing how certain times, certain gestures, certain odors link you up with the past. I opened a little wooden box the other day full of bits of handmade lace and oddments of ribbon, and my Mother stood beside me, not because what I saw was hers, but because of the perfume that floated up and around, and I have no idea of its name.

I do know lily-of-the-valley and old fashioned Florida water bring back my Father. Not that he would ever have used perfume in daytime, but when he took a clean handkerchief to put in his nightshirt pocket, he liked a dash of cologne or perfume — a speck of luxury.

At times I could really go to town if I began to record of whom and what certain tunes made me immediately conscious.

The results achieved by fresh air and exercise in our little old schools were the same and quite as good as those of any public school today whose play and equipment and supervision are complete.

Discipline was strict and at least in the primary room enforced with little difficulty. Knuckles were rapped with the long wooden pointer teacher carried on the rounds, and there was the odd humiliating application of the strap, and in the second school the occasional necessity of consulting with the trustees as to the advisability of expelling some particularly refractory pupil.

Paradise kept on growing and growing, and again school-room space was inadequate.

The only available space was a room upstairs over an implement warehouse and next door to the showroom and workshop of a carpenter and undertaker.

The floor in this room was only single boards full of knot holes, and also with a few holes cut in strategic places. Little paper windmills stuck on long pins and into Gray's History of England whirled merrily in the draft from the unheated machinery room below. When the hum got a bit too loud, a foot over the hole or a touch of a toe to the history was all that was needed until the danger of discovery was past.

It was in this upstairs schoolroom that Jack and Oliver staged a series of noon concerts that almost finished the scholastic careers of the two main instigators.

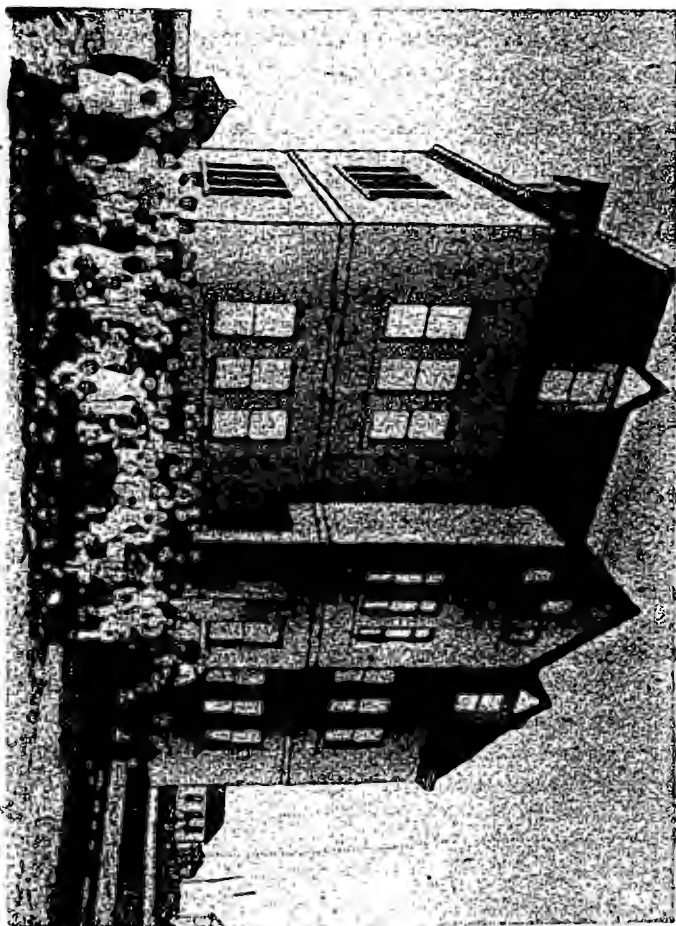
Oliver was stage manager and publicity man. He was the

barker who ballyhooed the show from the landing at the top of the outside stairway. He didn't belong in our school really, as he lived a couple of miles out in the country on a farm and the district school claimed him. But it was one of those infrequent intervals when he gave the town school the benefit of his rare talent for troublemaking. He would hear of the fun we were having in Paradise and suddenly the country was too tame, or things got too hot for him out there and he would decide it was time for a change. Taking unauthorized leave he would stride into town through mud and water on shortcuts through the fields on the tallest stilts he could handle. At once every boy and girl in town had to have stilts, raising the step higher and higher. In winter he arrived in style by dogsleigh. By the time the town school had palled on him or the teacher had his number, the storm was over in the country and the way back to the district school was open.

Jack provided the accompaniment. Just this winter when I saw him again after many years and we were recalling among other things these noon concerts, I made the mistake of calling Jack the pianist. He gravely insisted he was not a pianist but an organist, and the musical instrument was not an ordinary organ, but a pipe organ. So Jack was the organist — his pipe organ the teacher's flat topped desk.

He always began the number wearing his big yellow dogskin gauntlets, but when he really got down to the spirit of the piece, swaying back and forth, pulling out and pushing in non-existent stops, executing long runs up and down the keyboard that sent the teacher's books flying, off would go one mitt, then another, usually in the direction of the singer and to the enthusiastic applause of the entire audience. He never stopped; never condescended to notice the absence of the dogskins, being so wrapped up in his work, until he received them back again when the end came and he stood up to bow graciously and smile his "thank you."

The new three-story brick school — one of the old one-roomed ones shows at right side.



"Annie Laurie," "Jock O'Hazeldean," "Men of Harlech," were all great favorites.

One day when as usual everyone had rushed through lunch or dinner to be in their seats for the opening number there was a slip-up.

The lookout posted on the stair was so interested in what was going on in the class room that he forgot his duty and left his post.

Bursts of laughter and noisy hand clapping drowned the noise of footsteps on the stair.

We were caught red-handed when the sentry vanished into the undertaking workshop.

There were no more concerts.

A year or two and another general shuffle of schools was necessary.

The two buildings were moved away to make room for a three-story brick building — four rooms and an assembly hall at the top.

Besides being used for strictly school affairs, the assembly hall was in general use for church on occasions, for recitals and concerts other than strictly church affairs.

A program of one such concert given during the South African War I should like to record here, because I am sure there are still many whom it will interest. Apart from this local interest, it is a specific example that will show you what hardy specimens we were. Imagine if you can a concert today with twenty-eight numbers, many of them encored and encored! Imagine if you can an audience with sufficient stamina to last it out!

February 9th.

GRAND PATRIOTIC
CONCERT

February 9th.

In Aid of the Mansion House Fund

PROGRAMME

Part I

1. ADDRESS..... *T. L. Morton, M.P.P.*
2. CHORUS..... "Men of Britain"....? (*The mark is mine*)
3. RIFLE DRILL..... *Boys' Brigade*
4. SONG AND CHORUS... "Rule Britannia"..... *Mr. Pearson*
5. INSTRUMENTAL..... March (selected)..... *Mrs. Wallon*
6. SOLO..... "Hearts of Oak"..... *Mr. Bond*
7. RECITATION..... "Empire and Justice"..... *Miss Williscroft*
8. SOLO..... "The Soldier's Dream"..... *Miss Rose*
9. ADDRESS..... *Rev. W. G. Wilson*
10. SONG AND CHORUS.. "Men of the North"..... *Mr. G. Smith*
11. SELECTION..... *Orchestra*
12. SOLO..... "Jessie's Dream" (Request)..... *Mrs. Galloway*
13. SONG AND CHORUS. "Soldiers of the Queen"..... *Mr. Creary*
14. SELECTION..... *Orchestra*

A few minutes intermission while the men streamed out to stretch and smoke, and the women greeted and gossiped with their neighbors, then at the first bang of the orchestra everyone hurries back and settles down for—

Part II

15. SELECTION..... *Orchestra*
16. ADDRESS..... *Rev. J. E. Munroe*
17. SWORD DRILL..... *Boys' Brigade*
18. SOLO..... "Britannia the Pride of the Ocean"..... *J. Broadfoot*
19. RECITATION..... "Downfall of Poland"..... *Rev. A. W. Woods*
20. SOLO..... "Little April Fool"..... *M. Cory*
21. SONG AND CHORUS.. "Rifles of England"..... *Chas. Jacob*
22. RECITATION..... "Absent Minded Beggar"..... *Fannie Morton*
23. INSTRUMENTAL..... "On to the Battle"..... *Miss Morton*
24. SONG AND CHORUS "The Lads in Navy Blue"..... *E. Gardiner*
25. RECITATION..... "The Bulletin Board"..... *E. Moore*
26. SOLO..... Selected..... *Mr. Pearson*
27. DUMBBELL EXERCISE..... *Boys' Brigade*
28. TABLEAU..... "The Bugler's Dream"..... *Boys' Brigade*

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

I think the program ended there because the stock sheet of cardboard couldn't hold any more.

The special number on this truly cosmopolitan program was number 22.

Remember it?

"He's an absent-minded beggar, but he heard his country's call,

And his regiment didn't need to send to find him."
and at the end of each verse,

"Give! Give! Give!"

Just as they were doing it in the music halls of old London, the audience, at each impassioned "Give!" tossed silver and folded bills up onto the stage where the silver rolled off into the tin trough of the footlights under the piano and behind the curtain, and the bills fluttered at Fannie's feet.

It was exciting and dramatic.

I'll spare you a second ordeal, but my scrap book programs show an almost endless parade of instrumental solos and duets with the teacher and with each other, the monotony broken to some extent by vocal solos and recitations.

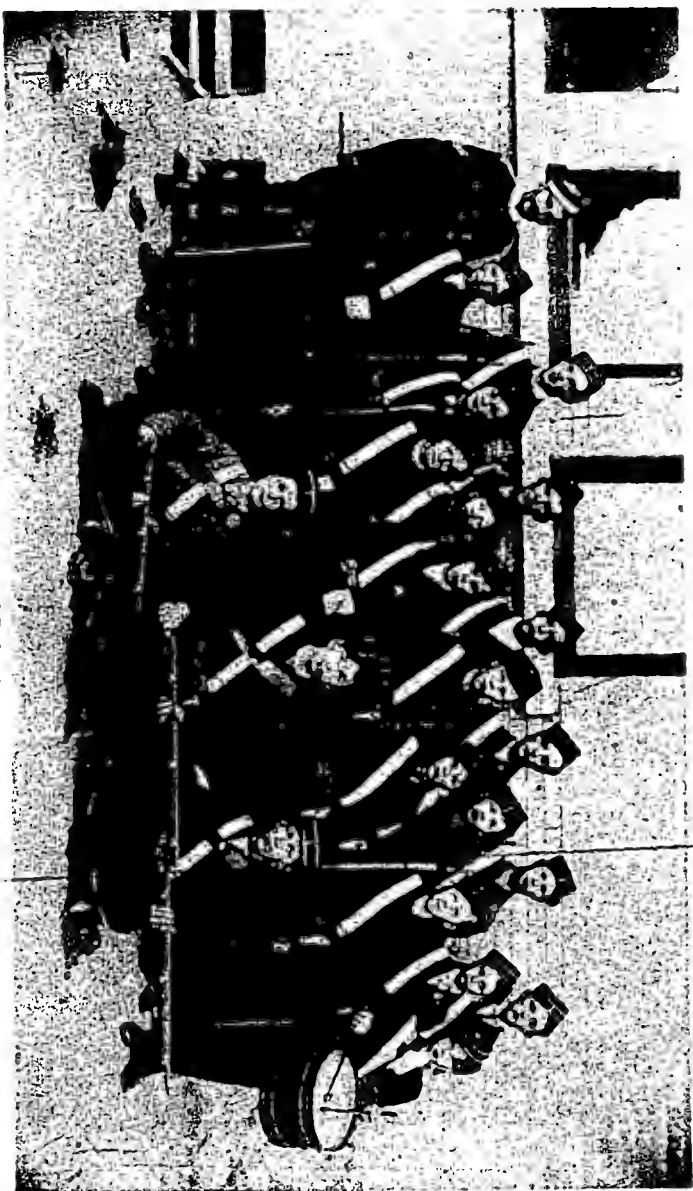
Checking these programs over is a sorry business.

Scarcely a grownup, scarcely a pupil lives in Paradise now.

Many, many of them live only in the memory of their friends who knew and loved them.

"There! There! little girl don't cry!
They have broken your slate I know
And the glad wild ways of your schoolgirl days
Are things of the long ago.
There! Little girl, don't cry!"

Yes! They are all of the long, long ago.



The Boys' Brigade.



The Town Band

XIX

"How noiseless falls the foot of time
That only treads on flowers."

A HANDFUL of little log buildings and in the midst a little log church with at first nothing to mark it outside as different from the others, nothing to indicate that here was the religious centre; indeed, even the social centre, of the district.

Just as the school had been several years in getting a permanent location and a building of its own, so the different churches took time to become really established.

I am told that the first missionaries held Sunday service in the open, fallen logs for pews, and a stump for a pulpit, then in various homes and in the first log schools.

In 1878 land was donated, and with a united concentrated effort, with gifts of logs, lumber and other supplies, the first Presbyterian Church became an integral part of Paradise.

It was the first church and it was also my church, since I happened to be of Scottish parentage, but I remember nothing much about it except hanging out a south window picking the big green burrs that grew below it, when I should have been paying attention to the Sunday School lesson.

Little did I know, and less would I have cared, had I been told that there and then my future was decided. The husband who was the boy who first saw me in this undignified position claims it was love at first sight.

The year of the big hailstorm, 1893, came around, and in that memorable August catastrophe, the little log church was levelled as if a giant tank had passed over it. The roof went one way, seats and pulpit another, log was torn from log and away to the four winds went every chance of my children being told X marks the spot where their Dad first met their Mother.

Unfortunately I can't picture them even faintly interested.

The new church, a brick one this time with a steeple, was completed in record haste after the proud day the corner stone was laid with all the usual rigmarole. All around stood the wagons and buggies that had brought the country members in for the great event, horses unhitched and tethered to the wheels, cropping the long grass or enjoying their oats from a sack on the ground or from the wagon box; men, women and children clustered round the platform where the choir and the elders and the minister stood.

Some bitter opposition developed when it was decided to buy an organ for the new church. You know the old argument, "It was good enough for my Father, it's good enough for me." Besides, some of the older and more conservative members couldn't reconcile oldtime religion and new-fangled organ music. A few refusing to be contaminated left the church — but not for long.

The story told of one old Highlander standing outside watching another old crony going into the church where the organ could be heard playing softly, indignantly asking, "Be you going into the dance?" is not just a story. It is true.

From the windows of the Sunday School the different members of the Ladies' Aid were interested spectators when our minister brought home to the Manse beside the church his bride from Winnipeg.

They peeped out, carefully avoiding being seen, and commented excitedly on the charming citified appearance of the lady.

In imagination they shared the surprise of the happy, hungry couple as they walked alone into their dining room where supper for two was laid, a supper to which each member had contributed her very best.

The kettle sang a welcome from the kitchen.

That was a very gracious, thoughtful homecoming bespeaking a warm friendly hospitality and, too, a realization that the first meal in a new home of newlyweds is something on which outsiders should not intrude.

In the evening the Ladies' Aid had their innings when the minister and his lady held open house for any of the congregation and the townspeople who couldn't wait to see and welcome and to be seen.

Gradually all prejudices against anything secular invading the sanctity of the church had disappeared. Socials, garden parties, magic lantern shows, tea meetings — all were part of church life now.

At the affairs where refreshments were served, and that meant practically at every kind of entertainment, every woman vied with every other woman in producing the lightest tea biscuits, the fanciest icing on three-storied layer cakes, the tastiest sandwiches.

At these "bun-feeds" it was a toss up which was the most surprising — the number of children who presumably were budding Presbyterians, or the bottomless pits they used for stomachs.

When strawberries and raspberries were in season and plentiful, lawn socials or sociables and garden parties were fashionable and a pleasant means of raising money for all church schemes.

The church grounds, or someone's lawn, suddenly blossomed out in rickety little shelters covered with leafy poplar branches and decorated with gaily colored bunting and flags and strings of bright Japanese lanterns that bobbed and swung in the slightest breeze.

Big glasses of homemade raspberry vinegar, orangeade,

lemonade, fuzzy Boston cream, saucerfuls of velvety ice cream topped with generous helpings of wild berries, platefuls of cake wedges, and good big sugar and plain cookies disappeared like magic, some legitimately paid for, some the other way. Supplies seemed inexhaustible and none was ashamed to ask for more.

Sometimes we had Sunday School picnics that were not intended as money-making affairs. They were treats for the children that even the parents enjoyed.

These were held in any of several nearby groves, but usually in Mary May's on the north bank of the river in town, or in Beatrice's grove, a mile out of town west and also on the river.

Boards over fallen trees for teeter-totters, ropes knotted over tree branches for swings, races for old and young, for fat and thin, potato and peanut races, and jumps for cheap little prizes passed the time quickly.

Women got each other up-to-date on all the local news, exchanged recipes for specialties in cooking, or homemade cure-alls, always with a wary eye on their scattered flock.

Men stood around rather sheepishly and awkwardly talking of crops, of stock, of politics, and I wouldn't doubt, of the latest scandal.

Then the picnic, the real part of the picnic — the food — for which the youngsters started clamoring as soon as they reached the grounds, was ready.

Basketfuls of good plain food were pooled on big tables under the trees or if you or your children preferred your own make to Mrs. Somebodyelse's, which you were almost certain to draw at the common table, you clucked all your brood around you on the grass and dug in. Boilers on stoves just there for the afternoon provided lots of hot tea and coffee.

Altogether these picnics were heaps of fun if the weather-man was kind.

One of Min's clearest memories of those days concerns a

picnic when the weatherman was decidedly unkind and didn't live up to the expectations of the morning that had dawned bright and clear.

Minnie lived two miles or so south and west of Paradise, and as this particular picnic was to be held in Beatrice's grove a mile west of town, all in all, there and back, Min had a six-mile walk unless she were lucky enough to get a lift.

She started alone for town all dolled up in her Sunday-best dress, carrying under her arm a carefully folded parasol and a pair of cherished patent leather boots.

My children laugh now when I talk of "boots" instead of shoes, but we wore boots then — high-laced or buttoned, so I formed a habit evidently difficult to break.

When Min reached the far edge of Paradise she sat down on the road side, took off her dusty old everyday boots, hid them at a marked place in high grass by the fence, buttoned on the patent leather beauties, raised her parasol, and strutted slowly and solemnly through town looking and feeling like the Queen of Sheba, and hoping that every one she met took special note of all her grandeur from head to feet.

I'll bet she rated a second look too. She was clear olive-skinned, brown-eyed, tall and slim, and certainly one of the best lookers around or in Paradise.

Once the town was navigated, down went the parasol until the picnic grounds were in sight, then up again for a few minutes, until she greeted her friends.

Remember the story of the Scot who wouldn't let his shortsighted son wear his glasses unless he was working, in case he wore them out just looking at the scenery?

Min was taking no chances on overworking her parasol. The picnic over, she started for home, and disaster overtook her.

The sun went under a cloud, the wind rose in heavy gusts, and the rain started to fall in sheets. Frantically she

struggled to control her spiteful parasol. No use. Inside out it went and wouldn't turn back. The gorgeous patent leather boots melted in the soaking rain, and when she found her old ones they were full of water and useless. Her Sunday dress was a sorry mess, and good dresses didn't grow on trees.

All the glamor and the glory of the morning, all the fun of the afternoon, faded into insignificance as she stumbled along the endless muddy road home.

This winter I saw Min again, for the first time in about forty years.

She is as lovely, as strikingly lovely, though not as slim, as she ever was under her adored parasol.

Only one thing was wrong.

She was no longer Minnie, but Minerva Belle, and she told me the reason.

It appears she was registered in the vital statistics book at Paradise just as the second baby—number two. "Minnie" was acquired at home in the course of time when numbers three, four and five came along.

The registration of a name never seemed so important until once upon a time she wanted to go away on a trip overseas. Passports insist on such things as given names and birth dates. How else could they be sure the person asking for the passport was the person registered as a number?

Fortunately there were still old-timers at Paradise who could and did take affidavits that Minnie was number two, and with a name her own responsibility now, our Min became legally Minerva Belle. Some of her friends still balk a little at all that splurge and call her Wanda.

Nice going, Min!

Some Sunday School picnics took the form of a railway excursion to neighboring towns.

That was something!

Lucky, oh so lucky! if you were among the fortunate

Sunday-schoolers herded for a short time under their teacher's wing, streaming down the road to the station.

If you weren't you flayed yourself by going to the station anyway to see the "Special" come snorting around the corner where Becky's little store once taunted your childish appetite.

Envious and full of self-pity, with difficulty holding back the tears your pride would not let fall, you watched the last car disappear in the distance and imagined the fun the youngsters would have all the long, long day, until tired and dirty and happy, they climbed aboard at night again.

In a small town trains were always of interest. They were a glamorous visible tie to the outside world, and around train time the tempo of the whole town changed. Buggies, bicycles, wagons, delivery carts, people on foot — all headed down the roads leading to the station. At the last minute Bena's and Maggie's old grandfather urging the fat old pony to an extra spurt of speed, arrives and ties up to the platform and tosses up the precious bags of mail.

If it is a train for Winnipeg and the East, the bustle and excitement is soon over.

If it is going west, to the West which still held mystery and allure, its noisy chug-chugging engine, bell ringing, passenger and freight cars and caboose, go swinging down the old Saskatchewan Trail, and at Third Crossing it throws back a shrill goodbye whistle.

The tie to the interesting unknown outside world is broken, and we are left stranded — alone and feeling sort of let down.

Remember how thrilled you were to stand beside the track watching crossed pins laid on the rails and welded into tiny scissors by the pounding wheels as the express whizzed by at a mile-a-minute?

It was almost incredible to believe any machine could attain such a fantastic speed.

Although we had the train itself only a few minutes, two or three times a week, we had the tracks, the right-of-way, all the year round.

Along it we went hunting the first crocuses, the first sweet grass to make into fragrant ribbon-tied wreaths to send to our eastern cousins.

All the flowers as they came in bloom seemed to like the sunny windswept right-of-way, and blossomed there first.

For boys and girls, for young men and young women, it was a chosen promenade on Sunday afternoons and early weekday evenings.

Life was very simple and satisfactory then — home, church and school.

Just as sweet and homely as the grey plush pussy-willows, the wild prairie roses, the bluebells and orange lilies that each Sunday flanked the Holy Bible on the pulpit of our little church, placed there by Lou and her sisters who had scurried around the farm gathering the loveliest freshest blooms to be found.

Our Presbyterian church was the first established, but soon there were others — Methodist, English, Baptist, and with difficulty the town's population was spread thin enough to fill and finance them.

"So many gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind and wind,
When just the art of being kind
Is all this sad world needs."

XX

"Everywhere, everywhere Christmas tonight,
Christmas in lands of the fir-tree and pine,
Christmas in lands of the palm tree and vine;
Christmas where snow peaks stand solemn and white,
Christmas where cornfields lie sunny and bright."

THE OTHER night I was a guest at a regular meeting of a women's club.

As was usual, reports were given by conveners of different committees all more or less along the same line — just a record of work completed and under way.

That is, they were all the same but one, that of the Book Review unit.

When this report was called for there seemed none of its members present, but there was a great deal of whispering, nudging, nodding. Then from somewhere a request came for a march to be played.

One of the members sat down at the piano, and to the strains of one of Sousa's marches, ten very sheepish, self-conscious young women, looking neither to right or left, paraded in, each with a large white cardboard clutched to her breast.

They lined up at the front of the room; the convener read a little piece of poetry about each one stressing a personal attribute beginning with the hidden letter; the cards were reversed one by one and at the end of the act, ten embarrassed, giggling young ladies with a letter on their chests had spelled out, "Book Review."

They did much more than spell out a unit, and that quite unintentionally.

They took me back on the flying carpet of memory and dumped me down at a Christmas tree concert of long long ago, as far as I am concerned, though I suppose the same routine goes on yet at Christmas entertainments.

A line of little girls (usually) all in white, best bib and tucker, hair crimped and waved, is marching up the aisle of church or hall with white cards strung around their necks. A lot of shoving and pushing and pulling, and a line is formed on the platform, then "M is for Merry," or "H is for Happy," and the card is reversed to show a big black M or H. Down the whole line one after another picks up the thread and carries on the little verses until "Merry Christmas" or "Happy New Year" is spelled out, with a grand finale all in unison. Then off the platform they strut to the loud applause of parents, playmates and friends.

Christmas was then, as to children now, the very pinnacle of happiness, rivalling summer holidays. It is one thing that hasn't changed so much. Presents are just as numerous but maybe more expensive, more specialized. Maybe knowing no better we were more easily satisfied.

My sister and I looked forward for weeks to the parcels from uncles, aunts and cousins in the East, who took pity on our supposed few chances of getting really nice things. The mystery of that box, of this cupboard, was almost more than we could bear before Christmas Eve came and we hung our stockings up beside our bedroom stove, firmly resolved to lie awake to catch "Santy" in the act of filling them. We would have been scared to death if we had.

The next thing we knew, it was Christmas morning and Santa Claus was come and gone.

The "Santy" fantasy is thrilling to little children as long as their belief in the jovial old saint is complete.

They watch fascinated, shivering with excitement and not a little fear, at the entertainments as the lumbers

around cracking his whip, shaking his sleigh bells, chucking them under the chins or pulling their ears.

Then someone older and more sophisticated enlightens their ignorance and innocence, or they notice incredulously that "Santy has slippers just like daddy's," or they discover the box that held some special present in their own basement.

They may continue for business reasons their Christmas letters and requests but it is never quite the same for them again.

All Christmas stockings seemed to follow a set plan in the filling—some mixed nuts, raisins, an apple, an orange, and a lot of "Christmas mixed," and away down in the toe where it trickled, an odd dime or nickel. Bulky presents were laid on the foot of our bed.

When our children were little, to keep them in bed until a reasonable time, that is, reasonable from our standpoint, they hung their stockings in the den by the fireplace, and were allotted a chair for the overflow.

The door was shut and supposed to stay shut until after breakfast.

It was, I suppose, too much to ask or to expect. The keyhole was annoyingly inadequate for anything but a peek at what was in the line of vision.

In more confidences from my "bewildering offspring," I learn that the door was opened and shut very quietly on more than one occasion. Trusting to the soundness of our sleep, they thoroughly enjoyed themselves, played with the toys and swapped and rearranged them to their complete satisfaction—and then back to bed.

I never knew the difference, nor that their surprise wasn't genuine. My problems ended when the gifts got to stocking or chair.

Certainly my sister and I were neither ingenious nor resourceful and would have been no addition to any ways

and means committee when we were young. We never thought of anything like that.

Christmas day though long, passed quickly enough with all the new dolls and toys to play with.

Christmas dinner — oyster stew, turkey and trimmings, and plum pudding surrounded by a purplish rim of burning brandy and raisins, all were taken in our stride. It was distinctly a family affair, and as soon as over it was time to get ready for the Christmas-tree concert.

The first Christmas-trees I remember were held in the town hall above Becky's little store, reached by a steep wooden outside stair at the back.

This was partly because the whole affair was not considered sacred enough for the church, partly because there was not enough room in the little log church.

For weeks before, Mother drilled the Sunday-school children in solos, dialogues, recitations and drills, and after the final rehearsal which, as is usual, was dreadful, could only hope for the best.

On the night of nights, every youngster keyed up to do or die was surprisingly good.

Later, when the log church was blown down in the big hailstorm, and opposition to all but strictly religious entertainments had died out, we put on much more elaborate programs. Flags, sword or gun drills to stirring music were carried through to a glorious conclusion with Tena or Tillie, Ida or Grace leading the rival lines.

Naturally, just as you would, I remember best the numbers I took part in myself, and I can't refrain from recalling here just one breezy dialogue.

I was the nurse to my little brother (pro tem) Toot, who had developed a noisy stomach-ache after too much Christmas dinner. Down the aisle hurries an important medical gentleman, rather pigmy as to size, but correctly attired with the regulation "props" of a borrowed

"Christy-stiff" (several sizes too large), a long black coat and carrying in his hand a rusty black grip.

Fate was laughing up her sleeve.

That was the same boy who first saw me backwards hanging out the Sunday school window, the same whom my children call "Dad."

The proudest Christmas I ever remember was the year I had my hair cut.

By Christmas it was just long enough to roll on curl papers or rags. Mother never weakened enough to let me have it cut a second time.

Down the aisle I pranced, and up on to the raised tier of seats at the back of the pulpit with the rest of the children in the choruses, my head a fairly decent copy of Topsy's except as to color. On my way I heard old Mrs. Budge ask her next neighbor, "Who is that child?"

I was all goose flesh with pride and excitement.

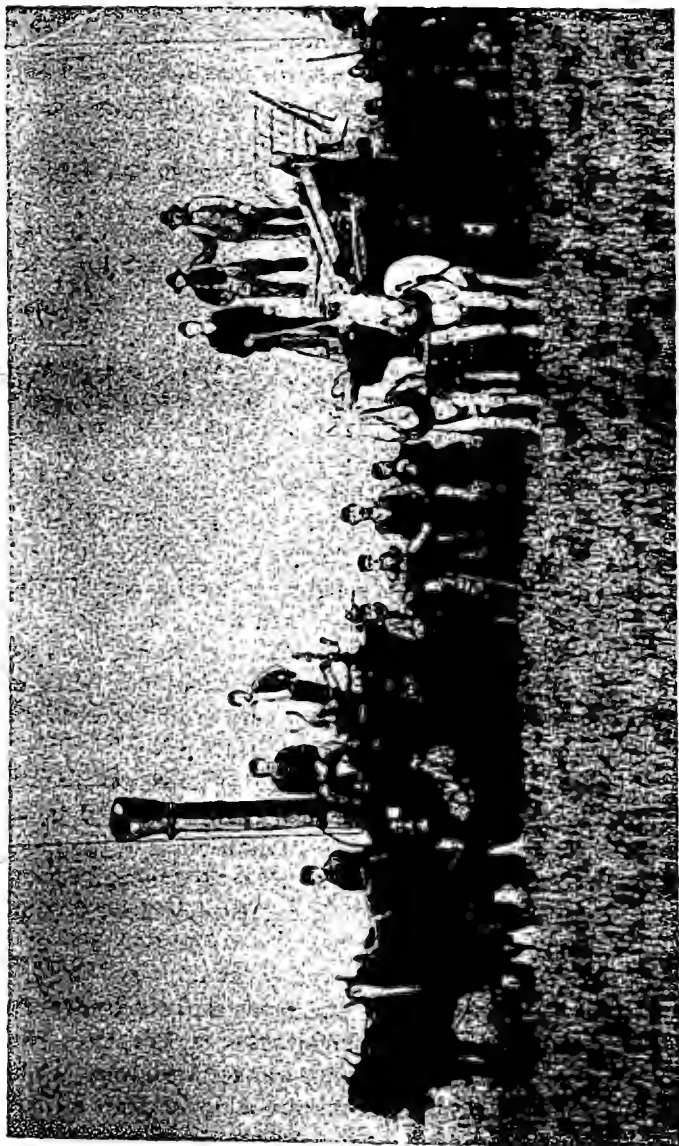
After all, there wasn't anything very strange in wanting short curly hair when mine was straight and hung straggly around my shoulders. It is a habit we develop early in life, wanting to be something other than we are and look.

We are young, we wish to be older; if we are short we wish to be tall; if fat, we crave to be thin; if our hair is straight, we'd like it curly; if our eyes are blue, we want them brown, and everything vice versa.

Nowadays with lipstick and rouge, eyebrow pencils and creams, manicures and permanents, bleaches and dyes, diets to slim and diets to fatten, vitamins for this, that, and the other deficiency, it is a relatively simple though expensive matter to improve or alter the equipment Nature started us out on life with.

It wasn't so easy then.

A jar of corn starch and a chamois skin to remove the shine of soap and water, curling irons or curl papers, a curl or two or a "switch" to pin on, was the sum total of our beauty aids, but we did the best we could with what we had.



Harvest Scene

Christmas is a lovely happy time, or should be if we remember its origin at all.

There is good cheer in the very air and "Merry Christmas" comes naturally and easily to the lips of passers-by who the rest of the year manage only a tepid, lacklustre "Good morning," or a vacant, "Hello."

"Not heaven itself upon the past has power,
But what has been, has been and I have had my hour."

XXI

"There can no great smoke arise
but there must be some fire."

ONE OF the first lessons a child is taught, is to be careful of fire; or else he learns at first hand the danger.

Sparks from the friendly kitchen stove may smoulder in the old rag mat till every one is tucked in bed and then burst into flame. The wick in the coal oil lamp may burn or be turned too low and the oil explode. Fluttering cotton skirts around a bonfire are an open invitation to disaster. Steam, scalding water or grease, matches, all are pretty bad medicine.

We had no really bad scares with fire in our home, only two or three close calls, not counting the times the stove pipes or the chimneys saved the trouble of cleaning by burning out.

Once the hall hanging lamp burnt too low, and but for the appearance of Mother at the psychological moment that was a might-have-been. Possibly she heard the sputtering lamp; maybe she noticed the hall was dark. In a jiffy she had pulled down the iron frame, slipped out the lamp and tossed it out the front door where it exploded harmlessly in a snow bank.

Once during a cold spell the furnace had been stoked till it nearly burst. Mother noticed smoke. Everything upstairs was in order. Her search finally lead her in behind the furnace and in the pitch dark she found a solid oak joint

under the back parlor charred and glowing. At night would have been a bad time for that to happen.

The third time happened in the morning. The maid of the moment was going from pantry to kitchen with a lighted lamp in one hand, getting breakfast, one dark day in winter. The door swung back and knocked the lamp from her hand to the floor where it broke. The oil spread in a pool both ways from the door and caught fire. The maid's education about putting out fires was confined to throwing on water, so on the miniature lake of burning coal oil went the pail of water standing handy in the sink.

By the time Dad and Mother arrived in a rush downstairs, the door was burning and it looked like the beginning of the end of Oak Villa. However, rugs and mats, flour and salt saved the day, and except that we needed new blinds and a lot of fresh paint, there was no cause for anything but thanksgiving.

In the dry days of early fall, the air was always full of smoke, and at night fires rimmed the horizon in every direction. Burning strawstacks dotted the countryside like giant torches, as farmers took the easiest way to clear away what seemed a useless encumbrance of their fields.

Once the heavy bush to the south took fire, and for days clouds of smoke drifted around and hung over Paradise. Wild game and wild fowl, plentiful everywhere, naturally sheltered in the scrub. Driven ahead of the fire, helpless, they smothered and burned. One big black bear survived long enough to reach town running clumsily and panic-stricken down the streets. I don't remember what fate was his — freedom or death — in town, but I'm sure for long enough the threat held over runaway children, "The big black bear will get you," must have been a sure stopper.

Several miles to the north of Paradise was the Big Grass Marsh of which I have spoken before — a wide, reedy expanse of shallow water. It was the home of thousands of wild ducks and geese, while their spring and fall migrations

were in progress, and of muskrats all the year around.

The ground under and near this old lake bed was several feet deep in rich brown peaty loam.

Someone had the inspiration that if the marsh were drained the low farms around it would not be so apt to flood in spring. It would also make available great stretches of unbelievably productive grain land.

Huge ditches were dug, east and west, north and south. The marsh was pretty much a thing of the past. Mushrooms popped up in bunches among the reeds and the old haunts for ducks and geese and rats were gone.

Then in the dry years the farms hadn't enough moisture in reserve and the hazard of fire was constant. In the old marsh, fires smouldered year in and year out, burning deep down under the damp surface, coming unexpectedly to the top under hay or straw stacks, coils or stooks that had kept the ground underneath comparatively dry. It was uncanny to see these go up in flames one by one in a pasture or field, with no fire at all around them — just as if they had been mined.

If the summer had been particularly dry and hot, all the surface and subsoil would be burned off, leaving great holes into which horses and a wagon could easily drop.

At such times it was not unusual for a call to come, mostly through the night, for help against the marsh fire.

Volunteers from town armed with potato sacks, shovels and spades, piled into hayracks and wagons and drove out the few miles as fast as the horses could go to the threatened district.

Some were beaters who soaked their sacks at the water tanks that appeared from nowhere and went to it. Often the farm women, even children, were among the ranks of the beaters if it were their farm, their pasture, that was threatened.

Others dug shallow trenches along the fences, or ploughed deep furrows into which the tanks poured precious

water. That was the only way to limit the outbreak of fire to some particular section.

In the early hours of the morning, tired, dirty, smoke begrimed, sometimes scorched black, they'd come to town, and if the danger was not past, send out another gang.

This was one of many districts around Paradise where a first crop of one hundred bushels of oats or sixty bushels of wheat to the acre, when the thresher blocked with grain was a dream come true, and not a fairy tale.

Like many other pioneer towns with no organized fire protection other than a volunteer bucket brigade, time and time again Paradise was on the verge of being nothing but a memory.

Once a fire got under way, all that could possibly be done was to try to confine the flames to where they started. That particular building was doomed, and the real problem was to save the others near.

That is one reason that makes my going back to Paradise now rather a sad business. Many, many of the places I knew so well are gone and even if rebuilt they are often not those I knew.

The first big fire for me was in the early spring of 1892.

The glare on the windows made their bedroom so light that Dad and Mother wakened and their first instant fear was, "It's the store!"

Then the sound of running feet and the front door was burst open. The electrifying cry of "Fire! Fire!" nothing more, as the man, never stopping, went running on, rousing each house in turn.

Father and Uncle Bill were into their clothes like fire horses into harness, and off towards main street. Not until they were right there could they see through the flames that the store on the other side of the street was still safe.

Mother dressed my sister and me and let us go, warning us to stay together and at a safe distance. She put on the fire at home and got a boilerful of coffee ready, knowing

by past experience that it would be needed and called for.

By the time we got downtown, the fire seemed to be intent on wiping out the whole business section.

Right across from our store a small office building was just a smouldering heap; the hotel next to it, built to replace the one in which three little cousins were lost several years before, was well alight and certainly doomed. The stores from the hotel to the corner, Maggie's Dad's grocery, a hardware and an implement store were still untouched, but it was a hopeless task to try to save the buildings, so willing hands concentrated on saving what stock they could, carrying it out to the centre of the road.

That whole side of the block went, with the exception of the livery stable on the river bank, and for a while it was nip and tuck with the buildings across the street where our store was.

A volunteer bucket brigade went into action, grabbed pails from the hardware stock on the road, and a line was formed to the river. Pails of water were hurried along from hand to hand to men on the roofs who were knocking off burning brands and soaking the smoking shingles.

Even the women helped, dipping blankets from our stock into the old White Mud, which were handed up and spread out on the roof.

From home as my Father called for them, came pailfuls of coffee and sandwiches, and after the fire was at last under control and the store safe, my Mother handed out food and drink to all the helpers who arrived.

You need vast food resources for emergencies like that, and with the store behind us, we were never stuck.

In such times of stress, the best in people comes to the surface. Volunteers are never lacking when the other fellow needs a hand.

"A fellow feeling makes one wondrous kind."

Paradise has a fire brigade of sorts now and a fire engine I believe; and fire hazards are greatly reduced with more

substantial buildings, electric lights and basement furnaces, but even yet fire sometimes works its fearful will.

"Look up! and not down;
Out! and not in;
Forward! and not back;
And lend a hand."

XXII

"The hollow winds begin to blow,
The clouds look black, the glass is low."

WEATHER — just everyday weather and all the special sharp outbursts of temper on Nature's part — hailstorms, cyclones, blizzards, are all so vitally important to country people — more so, I think, than to city people, whose business is more stabilized or whose livelihood is not so entirely dependent on the generosity of old Mother Nature.

"It's going to rain!"

"It's going to hail!"

"There's a blizzard blowing up!"

"There's a cyclone coming!"

When we in country towns see a bad storm piling up and breaking, it is rarely of ourselves we think first. We are more or less protected, but here in the West where grain is our bread and butter, our fears are for the safety of the crop.

It doesn't matter a great deal how far advanced it is, as long as it is up at all. If it is hailed out early and not too badly, sometimes enough comes on for part crop or for feed. There is rarely time to plant again except for green feed. If it is hailed near harvest, there is no time for anything again that year. Wind can be almost as ruinous, shelling the ripe heads, and then there are all the plagues of cutworm, army worm, grasshopper, sawfly, rust, that can undo in a twinkling the year's work of the most conscientious hard-working farmer.

You hear people say there is no pleasing a farmer — that he is the world's worst pessimist.

He needs rain — There is too much rain.

He needs heat — There is too much heat.

The ground is so dry the seed won't sprout — The ground is so wet the seed is drowned out.

It is so cool the grain is going all to stem, and it will require a fortune for binder twine. It is so hot the grain is ripening without filling, drying out in the milk stage and so short the binder can't cut it.

There is so much humidity that rust, red and black, is developing.

It is shelled or beaten flat by the wind, and maybe not even a mower can cut it.

It is frozen, or eaten by plagues.

It is safely cut and stooked and the rain comes. After each deluge the patient farmer turns the sheaves hoping for the best.

The rain keeps up, the sheaves heat and sprout and the stooks become a sodden mass.

Then it is winter and they are frozen solid and covered with drifted snow.

If there is a plentiful harvest and the grain is finally threshed and stored, there is no market. The price drops till selling all won't pay the year's bills, and only big farmers can afford not to sell, since storage charges mount quickly and some ready money is needed.

Farmers are *not* pessimists.

Farmers are optimists of the first rank, maybe not voluntarily but of necessity.

It is only natural to fear in one way or another for what we love and for what means life to us. Farmers may see everything they have toiled and sweated over for a year gone in the winking of an eye, with not a single hope of recovery and through no fault of their own.

What do they do?

Maybe curse and swear a bit — why not?

I can even imagine some might sit down with head in hands and shed a bitter tear.

For one, I wouldn't blame them.

But when the first cruel shock is over and they have faced the facts, they start right in from the beginning and get ready for next year. The same old miserable daily round, the same brave, hopeful, daily round.

My hat is off to farmers, individually and collectively.

I know them, and their problems I have listened to all my life.

I'm even one by remote control, much to my sorrow, and like them, I can't let go even though I would.

Any one of Nature's phenomena that is out of the usual is terrifying, not only when it is right on top of you, but in its approach. In fact, I think the tense waiting for what may be the end of the world for you is harder to stand than the actual fact.

It is one time you get a true perspective of your own importance. You can't stop one drop of rain, halt one puff of wind, or dissipate one hail cloud. You are merely one helpless ineffective useless atom.

As in the case of fire, Paradise saw many hailstorms come and pass over, but to this day one is spoken of as the Big Hailstorm.

It was during the summer holidays of 1893 that my sister and I left home for a visit to friends on a farm near a neighboring town. It was intended as a short visit, but as things turned out, it was much shorter than expected.

We had very little time to make the rounds of the farm after we arrived on the afternoon train. This was unfortunate for us, as we very seldom had the chance of putting in some time around a farm, and it is always an interesting experience for town children.

It was fun to watch the cows sauntering lazily home in the evening, one behind the other, their heavy udders

swinging from side to side, making straight for the smudges in the barnyard, and standing in the smoke quietly chewing their cud while being milked. It was fun to watch the hired man squirt the fresh warm milk into the cat's mouth. The cat enjoyed it too.

We liked to watch the smug swaggering ducks leading around their trains of fluffy yellow babies, to see how the noisy hen could cuddle all her multicolored chicks under her spreading wings. We didn't like the geese that chased us with flapping wings and outstretched necks, hissing and Bronx-cheering like huge snakes, and we were through the gate as fast as we could go when the turkey gobblers started towards us with dragging wings and fanned tails spread behind their hideous heads. The long-legged big-knuckled colts were nice, and so were the calves and lambs, but offered no play-possibilities, like kittens and puppies.

The talk at the big supper table was so different from at home, a bit difficult to follow, but still interesting when they talked down to us.

In no time at all it was bedtime and then morning.

Just an average nice summer morning at first, but getting hotter and more humid and sultry as it wore on.

It was a favorite pastime of certain cranks to set a definite date when the end of the world was forecast. This particular date had never been offered as the dead line, but as signs of a coming storm multiplied, everyone got tense. Maybe, we thought, a mistake had been made in the date, and this was the awful day and we were far from home. The worst of anything was more bearable at home with Mother near.

Storm clouds piled up blacker and blacker. The terrific heat was gone and from being hot it changed to cool, then uncomfortably cold. It got darker and darker, lamps were lighted, then queer, glaring greenish yellow clouds pushed the black ones back, and an unearthly glare was over everything.

Dogs, cats, fowl, birds seek shelter anywhere. Cattle and horses huddle restlessly together in the lea of the sheds, and grownups as well as children have nothing to do but wait with all creation in a smothering hush for the end.

A little lost vagrant puff of wind from nowhere passes over and is gone. Another a little stronger follows and is gone. You hear a rumbling in the distance like an approaching heavy train. It comes nearer and nearer and the tree tops bend and crash, waves like the waves of the sea run over the grass and the grain fields, and they lie as flat as if mowed. Then the horizon, the whole world is blotted out in a white cloud of rain. Everything is swallowed up.

The storm is here.

Waiting is always ever so difficult whether you wait for good or evil, for life or death.

Waiting while a terrific hailstorm came, then exhausted itself, spreading ruin and desolation in its wake, is a sickening experience you have to go through to realize.

While the older people waited stolidly for the roof to go off at any minute, we children ran around in the lamplight placing pots, pans, dishes of every description under the little streams of water trickling through the roof, and emptying them as fast as they filled. The rain driven by the force of the wind pushes up under the shingles and through, then, as they went in batches it comes in steady streams impossible to control. The whitewashed cotton that covers the logs of the walls gets stained and brownish.

"There's the hail!"

It beat and pounded that little log house as if it had for it a deadly vicious personal hate.

There was no talking.

Even if there had been anything you felt like saying at such a time you would not have been heard shouting in the terrific din. The windowpanes shattered unnoticed.

Back of everyone's sickening fear was the single thought — *The Crop.*

When it was all over, and it wasn't really long—the only ray of light in such disasters is that you don't have long to wait to learn the worst—the sun came out bright and cheerful again as if in a hurry to make amends.

The men went out to their devastated fields.

Barefoot, we paddled around with the women gathering up baby chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, by the basketfuls. Dozens were killed outright by the hailstones, dozens were drowned in the pools of water that spotted the big farmyard. Those that showed a little spark of life were taken into the kitchen, laid in rows on folded papers in the oven of the big stove or around it in baskets or boxes filled with woolen clothes in the hope of reviving some of them.

It was a pretty hopeless task.

We went home on the train next noon and even children could see and understand the toll the storm had taken.

Fields of grain that had stood so tall and golden two days ago when we went to the farm were not just broken and beaten down; they were chopped and pounded into the ground so that not even a blade of straw remained in sight. The fields were as bare as if plowed and disced.

It didn't seem as if anything could be worse than the storm we had lived through, but it could. Paradise had been the storm centre. Not one pane of glass remained in town on north, northwest or southwest of houses and stores.

At home—and presumably every place fared the same—trees were broken off like matches. Carpets were rolled up into the centre of the floors where the furniture huddled. Quilts hung over the vacant windows where the blinds were torn into ribbons.

Everything was deluged, saturated, sopping.

Downtown basements were flooded.

Hailstones three inches across had pitted the sides of houses built of lumber with holes that will be there as long

as they hold together. More than one family made ice-cream that day.

Our little church was knocked log from log and lay in a jumbled heap with the seats and the pulpit and what was left of the roof.

Stories of narrow escapes from death of man and beast caught in the open and hammered unmercifully, stories almost good enough for Ripley's use, were brought in by every farmer coming to town. The stories of the completeness of the destruction were all alike.

~~That~~ That was the year of "The Big Hailstorm."

Next year must be prepared for.

"Men buy and sell by faith; the forges burn,
The drays are laden, countless mill-wheels turn,
Great ships are chartered, trains run to and fro;

A day — a single day — if faith were dead
No field were sown, no oven fired for bread,
Faith is the handman in a toiler's guise
Of all the world of workers."

XXIII

"There are tones that will haunt us though lonely
Our path be o'er mountain or sea,
There are looks that will part from us only
When memory ceases to be."

THE pigeon holes of memory hold many other things than tones and looks, and one of them is a cyclone.

Paradise had lots of excitement with the weather day in and day out, but it had never had a cyclone.

Bad storms came and went just as bad storms, without fulfilling the oft-repeated prophecy, "We're going to have a cyclone."

Then one Saturday we did.

All the usual signs of a coming storm, a long breathless sultry summer day, in the late afternoon high scudding black clouds, which in the south-west assumed the typical funnel shape associated with cyclones, narrow twisting tail and heavy top lost in the black clouds above.

In Paradise it was an average severe bit of weather with tearing gusts of wind, broken trees and rain.

Almost as soon as it was over, however, word reached town that a cyclone had struck several miles to the south and west.

Sunday morning after church, Dad hired a team and a two-seated democrat from the livery stable and we joined the procession of buggies, wagons and bicycles headed south.

Evidences of the storm increased all along the way. More and more trees that couldn't bend were splintered and

broken off like matches. Brush was all tipped in one direction. Branches were stripped and blackened, grass was browned as if a great blowtorch flame had passed over them. Odd barns and sheds had lost their roofs or collapsed, but only one farm house had been totally blitzed.

You have seen a tired Mother at her wits' end pick an obstinate youngster up bodily, and none too gently, and plunk him (or her) down on a chair almost hard enough to dislocate his (or her) spine.

It had happened like that to the innocent log farm house. It had been picked up all in one piece off its foundation as if it had been of no more consequence than my little playhouse, carried over to a nearby creek and dumped hard enough to knock it into smithereens and scatter the furniture, including a piano, broadcast.

Muriel had been trying to put in the time until the storm blew over by playing familiar music in the dark. She was playing one minute and the next she was lying unconscious in the scrub on the side of the creek beside the piano.

Everyone went poking around the ruins, down into the roofless open cellar and along the edge of the stream.

They listened to all the different stories of exactly how it happened, and passed them on with only small embellishments.

All agreed on how much worse it might have been. There might have been more people in the house. Muriel might have been killed. People seem to enjoy in a strange way picturing the awful things that didn't happen, piling up the climaxes in each story almost regretful that they were pure fiction.

Fortunately no one *was* killed, the house could be rebuilt, and offers of help poured in from every direction.

"Great perils have this beauty, that they bring to light the fraternity of strangers."

XXIV

"The land of the heart is the land of the west."

HOW often have you heard people remark, "The seasons are changing"?

To be sure, we still have spring and summer, fall and winter of a kind, but not the old kind. Spring, with so few of those soft tingling days, jumps right into summer or drags on and on, cold and miserable. Summer doesn't seem to have so many days in a row of blistering heat. They come too often in early June. There doesn't seem to be as much rain or show, or perishing cold. There are not nearly as many blizzards. Just my own opinion, of course, and not based on any statistics.

Listen to the stories of old-timers as they sit and smoke and yarn — stories of days when there seemed to be no letup in the biting-cutting winds that harried and drove the falling snow as if it were possessed of the devil or half a dozen devils, piling huge drifts around and over every obstruction, sifting it through the smallest crack and at a temperature of anywhere from zero to 50° below.

Outlying farms were often completely isolated and had to be as self-contained as if in a state of siege. Unless an emergency developed, no effort was made to dig themselves out until the snow stopped falling and drifting — signals tapped out at appointed hours on a wire fence were a poor substitute for telephone.

If the stock's necessity drove you to the stables to feed them or to milk the cows, you were fortunate indeed if you

had been foresighted enough to stretch a wire or rope from house to barn and could go back and forth in safety with a hand on the life line.

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, for one who never was out in a bad blizzard, to believe that the friendly beam of a lantern over the door, or of a lamp in the window could be invisible a foot or so away, that you could be utterly, completely lost in surroundings as familiar as your own kitchen.

But bury all landmarks deep under drifts, hide them from sight as if they never were, be wound tightly in a blanket of driven snow that makes you blind and even deaf, and you are as helpless as a little child.

Old-timers caught out in the open give up trying to orient themselves, give the horses the rein and trust to their sixth sense to get them home.

Stock overtaken by a blizzard will drift ahead of the storm until exhausted, their nostrils plugged with frost, then crowd against each other, lie down and die by twos and threes, or dozens, smothered and frozen.

Just as the year of The Big Hailstorm was a day of reckoning time in Paradise, so the year of The Big Blizzard was a marker. Things happened either before or after, for years.

The morning of The Big Blizzard my sister and I went to school as usual, as did most of the town children, so the day must have started out as an average winter day.

Possibly there were signs of coming bad weather for those able to read them, but there were no meteorological reports to warn you days ahead of what to expect in your particular district in the line of weather.

Long before noon, however, these indefinite signs were obvious to even the least experienced. Rapidly falling mercury, odd flakes of snow drifting ahead of a wind that increased in violence minute by minute, odd flakes that in an unbelievably short time were a blinding, cutting, crushing thing impossible to face.

I can picture my Mother sensing the coming storm, unable to concentrate on her work, anxiously going from window to window, straining her eyes to look out the little spot clear of heavy frost, or looking out the front door towards town. But our home, shut all in by oaks and elms and maples, was comparatively sheltered. We never seemed to get the full blast of any storm.

Anyway, Mother knew that Dad would know what to do.

My Father, busy in his little office in the centre of the store, may not have noticed at once how fast the storm was developing.

Customers came in for shelter, shaking snow from caps and coats, rubbing ears, nose and cheeks to restore circulation. All agreed we were in for it this time and it would be bad for anyone caught out on the open prairie.

At last Dad heard.

One look out into the fast-darkening street and he sent Allan, the head clerk and so the most trusted, hurrying out to take my sister and me home from school, hoping desperately that we had not been allowed to start out alone.

But the lad was hardly out of the door when Dad overtook him and sent him back.

He himself struggled on, on an errand he feared to let anyone else undertake.

It wasn't so very far to school — a block and a half over the track, past Becky's, past the town pump, a block, and then a block west; but buildings of any kind were scarce; all tracks were long since obliterated; truly you couldn't see your hand before your face. There was nothing, nothing at all to trust to but your own blind instincts.

School was reached after what seemed like an eternity, school where other fathers were collecting other children.

Well bundled up, we started out, my sister holding tight to father's hand and I on his back.

He first thought of taking a short cut across the prairie past the blacksmith's shop, started that way but turned

back to the straight way which had a few more landmarks.

How long it took to reach home and safety my Father never knew. It was a nightmare that seemed a lifetime and it might have been hours that he struggled through drifts more than knee-deep, dragging my sister along and supporting me with one hand as I clung around his neck, and a sickening fear, gripping his mind and heart, that he might lose touch with either one of us.

My Dad, you know, was a big man, well over six feet and no weakling, but when he stumbled against the door and my Mother helped us in and he realized we were safe home, he fell into a chair, put his head down in his hands and sobbed like a baby.

If your reaction to that is "Piffle," it makes no difference to me. It is the truth.

The relief of having brought us through a very definite danger to haven and the utter exhaustion of the strain, were too much.

It was one of the few times anyone ever saw my Father cry and pioneers will understand the tears showed no weakness.

As after the Big Hailstorm, when town and country got back to normal in the following days, stories of narrow escapes of this one and that, lost on the prairie or in their own back yard, passed from mouth to mouth.

One man in town struggling home through the storm tripped over a drift in his path. It was our schoolteacher, who had waited till all her charges were called for, and then started alone towards her boarding house. She got just so far and could go no farther, but fortunately was tripped over in time to save her life.

Stories of farmers, yes, of townspeople, going round and round small fenced enclosures before finding the way out, of checking up on isolated neighbors in fear and trembling, of trying to locate their own stock were common enough.

That was the year of "The Big Blizzard," and if you

think such stories are an exaggeration just talk to someone else who has been through one and who knows whereof he speaks.

If "memory is possession," that memory picture of my Dad holding my sister by the hand and supporting me on his back as I clung around his neck bent forward against the press of the white blinding storm, is one of my dearest possessions.

"Memory of things precious keepeth warm
The heart that once did hold them. They are poor
That have lost nothing: they are poorer far
Who losing have forgotten; they most poor
Of all who lose and wish they might forget
For life is one and in its warp and woof
There rims a thread of gold that glitters fair
And sometimes in the pattern shows more sweet
Where there are sombre colors. It is true
That we have wept. But O, this thread of gold
We would not have it tarnish; let us turn
Oft and look back upon the wondrous web,
And when it shineth sometimes *we shall know*
That memory is possession."

XXV

"I like that ancient Saxon phrase which calls
The burial ground, God's acre!"

IF MOTHER and home and memory are dear sweet lyrical words, what of "death"?

Phonetically it is cold and harsh and unmusical; not even the loveliest voice could breathe anything but heavy dull finality into it.

You can sing "Mother" and "Home," can put love and happiness into the very words, but you could not, no matter how you tried to forget what it stood for, alter the tonal quality of "death."

It fits the oblivion death is.

The cemetery at Paradise, as was usual, was three or four miles out of town.

It may have been some health regulation, and probably an economic one that first made it customary and necessary to gather into one common spot all those who had gone out into the sunset, and to locate that common plot as far away as possible.

I like much better the way they had down south on the big plantations which were handed down in the same family for generations, of having their own burial plot on their own land.

I like, too, the way they had in the old countries of having cemeteries around their churches where the daily life, once known, goes on and where friends may sometimes lay a few flowers in remembrance of happy days spent together.

I know these ways are often not feasible for a dozen different reasons, but still I like them best.

There is a queer morbid streak in some people that makes them go to funerals whether of close friends or not. I have known some such and they are cold and cruel as death itself.

The average child is neither cold nor cruel, nor morbid knowingly, just curious about something terrible that they cannot understand.

That is why on our days in the country on bicycle or on horseback my chums and I often stopped at our little cemetery, climbed the steps up and over the barbed wire fence that kept the horses and cattle out and wandered around.

We would read the names and dates and wonder just what had happened.

We knew all about the three little cousins who were burnt to death in the hotel they themselves had set on fire.

We had known "Dubby" who died in the second diphtheria epidemic when our school and the rink were closed so long.

We remembered well Lily, little daughter of the "Windsor House." That was the first time I was brought into direct contact with death, when with other little playmates I was taken from the warmth and light of the big boarding-house kitchen so strangely quiet, into the chill dimness of a little bedroom opening off it.

Blinds drawn close, the air heavy with the fragrance of flowers piled around her little bed, a wee girl we had so lately played with, lay quietly.

It's a ghastly barbaric custom, I think, whatever way you consider it, but why! oh why! should children ever look on death?

The funeral procession to the lonely cemetery, the buggies and wagons of neighbors and friends, a slowly moving line after a lumber wagon or democrat that jolted and bounced over the rutted prairie road carrying our

little friend covered over with a sheet, was a horrible dream.

When we used to visit the cemetery on Saturdays, it was always warm and sunny. Cows in the pastures on either side looked on placidly and disinterestedly, horses raced up and down the fence.

It wasn't spooky or frightening, but just dismal. Piles of yellow clay, tall grass, uneven weed, covered mounds, gopher hills, tippy wooden markers, no flowers to soften the cruelty of "earth to earth" except a few not easily discouraged wild flowers.

The Bible stories we learned in Sunday school of heaven, the place you went to when you left home forever, a city with gates of pearl and streets of gold and white robed angels, didn't mean a thing to a child who saw the stark reality of this end of the journey in a little prairie cemetery.

I was back just lately to Paradise to the funeral of one of the original settlers, back for the first time after more than thirty years into the church where as a child I knew every family pew, then on to the cemetery.

The same, but surely not the same. Everything neat and trim, grassy plots and walks, trees and flowers and shrubs.

Not that peoples' memories are longer now, their feelings deeper, but because automobiles have brushed away the miles between.

Memories, those "memories that bless and burn," crowded in so fast, too, too fast.

"I am not resigned to the shutting away
Of loving hearts in the hard ground,
But so it is and so it will be
For so it has been, time out of mind."

XXVI

"The web of our life is of a mingled yarn
Good and ill together."

THE YARN in the web of my young days was mostly good, and in that I am very fortunate. Life has a way of averaging some time; every hill has its valley, but every peak is something for which to be grateful.

In the web of life they say our daily experiences are woven in patterns of light and shadow. The patterns in my web may have duplicates in yours. I hope so.

Will you glance back with me at some of these that I hope you are familiar with too?

The Baptists had been holding a revival. When it was over so many people had seen the error of their ways and wanted to make a fresh start that a baptismal service was necessary.

For this there was no place available but the river. The ceremony was to be public at the railway bridge west of town, to be exact — at the third crossing.

On that particular Sunday long before the specified time to begin, most of the townspeople, certainly all of the children, had walked the mile and grouped themselves on the natural amphitheatre of the river bank opposite to where the penitents were to take to the water.

We thoroughly enjoyed it all — the strangeness of the proceedings, the shortness of the sermon and the aptness of the hymn, "Shall we gather at the river."

There were no special white robes to don. The new communicants just slipped into something the water wouldn't spoil, in the sheltering bush behind the minister. Mostly they walked in with no fuss led by one of the assistants, were immersed and helped up the bank again looking, we thought, like drowned rats. It was chilly and they had at least a mile to go back to town, but maybe excitement and exaltation kept them warm. Maybe there were blankets and hot irons in the buggies that hurried them home.

The highlight for the more or less sympathetic onlookers was when it came the turn of a short, stout little woman, in a violent pink flannelette nightgown. She was all set to go under peacefully, but her size, up and down, and all around, and the fact that her nightie, brand new and unabsorbent, ballooned out all around her, made it a bit difficult.

That was one time I was glad I was a Presbyterian.

In our little church on communion Sunday, everyone sat in their regular pews until the preliminaries were over, then the members taking sacrament moved into the centre of the church, and those in the centre who weren't, moved to the sides or went outside. Kind of a religious "musical chairs."

Left alone in our seat third from the front on the side, my sister and I followed with fascinated interest the progress of the silver goblet that went back and forth along the pews. The solemnity of the whole rite was blotted out in revulsion of feeling as we watched old Mr. So and So, with the long beard and the heavy moustache and the awful cough, drink, and hand on the cup. We privately made up our minds that when we were old enough to join, we'd sit right behind the elders.

All that is changed now too. An individual service has been in use for many years.

Many election night parades and bonfires are among my patterns—nights when I raced along behind the makeshift band as wildly excited as any. No apathy, but just plain

frenzy everywhere, no matter whether you knew what it was all about or not.

One of the biggest parades was the one staged the night word came of the relief of Ladysmith in the South African war. All the town took part in that, carrying a dummy Paul Kruger strung up on a pole at the head of the rabble. The main streets were circled to the tune of "We'll hang Paul Kruger on a sour apple tree." Only we didn't hang him. He was firmly planted in the centre of an enormous pile of brush and packing cases on the town common, saturated with coal oil and sent aloft with shouts and cheers and jeers.

It is most satisfactory to offer physical violence even to a dummy of one who has taught you resentment and hatred.

Winnie and Maggie's Dad came to Paradise in the fall of 1878 and took up a farm just a mile north of town. For some time he owned a small general store like my Dad's, but was burnt out in the fire that nearly got our store too.

Our Dads were old friends, our Mothers' friendship was based on common problems and a sincere liking for each other.

We children carried on the tradition.

It was always a great treat to have them spend a night with us, or to go home with them from school on Friday afternoon to stay until Saturday evening.

A town house and lot were humdrum and kind of typed, but farms were all different. There were all sorts and sizes of little log sheds and barns in the yard, built as the need arose, not as an orderly sequence, but stuck here and there alone or tacked on to each other like afterthoughts.

Gathering the eggs was a favorite errand. The hens hid their nests in and under all the different shacks, anywhere they weren't supposed to, in an effort to raise a family undisturbed. It was thrilling to find a new nest full of eggs; it was quite a gamble too. The eggs might be all fresh if several hens used the same nest; they might be a setting

almost ready to hatch. You could shake them or listen to them and hazard a guess; you could note if they were smooth and shiny and a bit shopworn, but in the kitchen was the final convincing proof.

There were cats everywhere, and the innumerable kittens took the place of dolls. The summer hours slipped by unbelievably fast as we played house in the empty granary and dressed and undressed our cat-children.

Best of all was when the threshers arrived. One extra mouth was neither here nor there when food had to be prepared in such quantities. One extra pair of hands, even if inexperienced, was useful to help peel potatoes, dry dishes, set table or carry out lunches to the fields.

We would ride on the hayracks full of sheaves to the thresher, and we never tired watching the fireman stuffing and poking straw into the gaping mouth of the engine. Its appetite was insatiable. We would stand beside the stream of grain pouring out into sacks or just out on the ground for shovelling later into deep wagon boxes to be sent to town. We would climb up and slide down the dusty straw stacks getting scratched and dirty, and our pigtailed and clothes full of chaff and burrs and nettles.

Sometimes we managed to squeeze into a small spot on a bench at the back of the big kitchen table with the hired men and did our share in making the platters of meat, the dishes of vegetables, the piles of homemade bread and buns, cakes and pies — raisin and dried apple — vanish as if a magician had waved a wand.

Lina and Gordon lived on a farm too, over two miles from town, and this was frequently our goal when school was out.

Their Dad, a pioneer of 1873, was one of the first permanent settlers.

One day, Lina came to school with an interesting story of a man-eating stallion her Dad had bought. "Seeing is

believing," and we could hardly wait to get out and see for ourselves this fabulous creature.

When we did go out, we clambered up the ladder into the hayloft in a dither of excitement and took up a position over the big box stall, eyes glued to a crack in the floor, hoping for the worst.

Everything was suspiciously quiet, disgustingly so. "Campsie Lad" may have been a thoroughbred stallion and on occasion a bad actor, but all we saw was an ordinary horse, maybe a bit larger than usual, calmly munching oats and hay.

Our picture of a story-book creature pawing the floor, blowing visible smoke and flames from his nostrils and snorting and screaming like an express train, was wrong from start to finish. We wanted to be in some danger, even up in the hayloft we wanted to shiver and shake with fear, and there wasn't the least excuse. It was as tame as sitting in Sunday school, and dreadfully disappointing.

We poked down as much hay as the crack in the floor admitted, stamped our feet and tried to whinny and neigh insultingly — no results.

Campsie Lad never even let on he realized there was a roof over his head, and two very disgusted girls.

He surely had a superiority complex.

It was bad enough for me. I had been brought out on false pretenses, had walked two miles to see something that was not, and had two miles to walk home again.

But poor Lina was like a doting mother whose prodigy child acts below average when friends are around. She was let down and humiliated that the man-eater wouldn't live up to advance notices, let alone go them one better.

Sometimes a small one-ring circus or Uncle Tom's Cabin show came to town. We would catch the odd conversations of our elders about the terrible carrying-on of roustabouts and hangers-on, for which the circus or show was just front.

We never saw or heard a thing we shouldn't have.

There was the Doukhobor trek that got as far as Paradise before being turned back. The "Dukes" were all supposed to be "bare-naked," and instead all men, women and children wore great long blue cotton Mother-Hubbard coveralls and cows' breakfast hats. Darn it, we never saw anything. It wasn't fair.

Carnivals were, of course, the highlights of the skating season. Everyone who skated, young and old, got rigged out in some kind of a costume that passed them through the door free. No rented costumes, even the most elaborate made at home, and the theme of it kept a deep secret from your best friend.

Evening stars, suns, moons, nights, mornings, angels, devils, fairies, kings, queens, knaves, all the heroes and heroines of the old fables, Uncle Sams, John Bulls—all the usual old stand-bys were there. Little girls with candles, in nighties with nightcaps tied under chins and little boys who could do no better than turn their coats inside out, borrow dad's old hat and carry bandana bundles on a stick over their shoulders, were just as happy and important as if they expected a prize, and suffered far less heart-burnings after the prizes were awarded than those elaborately costumed.

There were all the usual best this and best that, but two prizes once given were quite out of the ordinary. One was for the biggest hat, the other for the biggest bow tie. The prize-winning hat was patterned on a hog's head and had a prim to fit. The tie was built of planks that stretched from side to side of the skating ice and covered with print, and I'm sure I don't know how either hat or tie was supported during the evening.

Bena and Maggie were going to have a party and all the gang was invited. Their Dad, another pioneer, ran a little "notions" store in a small addition to the house, with a separate entrance, and also had the post office in a corner of the store.

We were all there early and it *was* early in those days, and soon the usual games were in full swing — guessing games, hide and seek, musical chairs and post office.

Most of the children liked playing post office. Emphatically I didn't. Being evidently somewhat of a pessimist or a fatalist, I knew some boy I couldn't bear would send me some letters that needed "stamping." It was much easier to take a definite stand and be a voluntary wall-flower when the popular kissing games were in progress.

The peak of the evening's pleasure was reached when we got ready for a taffy-pull. A great pot of brown sugar candy, shallow pans cooling, odd fingers poking every few minutes to see if it was ready to pull, hands well smeared with butter.

Soon everyone who had ambitions as a taffy-puller had a hot soft handful. We pulled and nibbled and nibbled and pulled, comparing with each other to see whose candy was whitest.

When it began to get too cool and stiff to handle longer, we'd twist our portion into a long rope and cut it into small pieces with the scissors or butcher knife.

During the evening I discovered that one of my baby teeth had disappeared. I took for granted I had swallowed it and forgot the whole affair.

My sister and I always liked to take home a souvenir to mother when we had been away on a party like this — some little prize we had won, a bit of cake, some popcorn, anything just to show we hadn't forgotten her, even when having fun.

This night we carried home with pride a generous sample of our evening's highlight — the taffy all wrapped up in tissue paper.

You have guessed it.

Imagine my humiliation and chagrin when Mother pulled and picked off the paper and found in one of the pieces of taffy my missing tooth.

Many years later Bena's dad built a new brick home on the river near us.

There was just one big lot between us and on it were dozens of Manitoba maples.

Manitoba maples are not considered much (if any) good for making maple syrup and sugar, but one spring Bena's dad, who had lived in Ontario where sugar making is regular spring routine, decided to see for himself what could be done.

As soon as the sap started running one spring he tapped a lot of the trees. Little tin spigots were hammered in the cuts and pails set to catch the flow. Each night and morning the pails were emptied into a barrel. When it was full, one night a big bonfire was built and a round open iron kettle put on to boil.

That was a banner night, a brand new experience, and one like my bath in the doctor's bathtub, that was never repeated.

We all hung around with cups. A ladleful to drink or dip bread into and you are satisfied long before you expected to be.

I don't think the sap ever went beyond a weak syrup stage except in very small quantities in the house for candy. It was certainly not worth the effort put into collecting it and boiling down such quantities for such a little of the finished product. The syrup itself wasn't bad, but had a rather green raw taste, not smooth and more-ish like Quebec and Ontario syrup.

However, the sugaring-off was fun while it lasted, and fun to look back upon, and because it happened only once, was all the more a specialized treat.

Hail and Farewell! Bena and Maggie.

Usually at Christmas time in our stockings we found a kaleidoscope, a long narrow tube with a lot of small colored pieces of glass and a mirror arrangement at one end. When you looked in at these from the other end of the cylinder

there were such beautiful, bright, symmetrical patterns, never two the same no matter how often you shook it.

As I look backwards through the years at the days when I was young, memory arranges a whole series of kaleidoscopic pictures with no beginning and no end.

It is Sunday afternoon and a little girl ready to go for the milk is standing at the dining-room window looking out over the field in front of the house that stretches almost to the store. In spring and summer it is green and golden with grain, but now it is a wide unbroken bluish white coverlet of snow that the wind is rippling as evenly as the crinkles in seersucker, and over the top of each little wrinkle is blowing tiny sprays of powdery snow.

"How *can* the wind make them so even and uniform just as the waves do the sand on the beach at the lake?"

I'm still as puzzled over them and over the uniformity of the corduroy on gravel highways.

The same child is kneeling (Oh! yes, it's true!) by the side of a wooden bed, feet all tucked up in a flannelette nightie begging God insistently to send a baby to *our* house instead of being so regular in deliveries to her playmates' homes. "Please God send us a baby, a boy or a girl, or twins — it doesn't matter what or how many as long as it is a little, little baby, or babies." It got a bit monotonous and discouraging, and then finally she understood that babies didn't come that way, "out of the nowhere into the here."

A youngster running home from school after four, takes the usual peek at a nestful of robins hidden in a little low bush beside the path and is horrified to discover that one ugly naked baby has been fed a long black horse hair. The small bird could almost be lifted out of the nest without dislodging the hair. The fear that some of the baby's "innards" might break loose and the hope that it might finally go all the way and be digested stopped the experiment.

A small child running (remember I said I seemed always

running) across the street in front of our store directly in the path of a rushing herd of range cattle being driven to the yards to ship, is suddenly frozen motionless with terror in the centre of the road. The dust whirls around. From the sidewalk someone rushes out, drags her in his arms and jumps back to safety.

By all accepted movie scenarios I should have married my hero when I grew up, but he was nameless and unknown.

Sunday school and the regular organist missing — "Maggie, will you play the hymns for us?"

Such simple little tunes — no sharps, no flats. Ashamed to refuse, over-persuaded, Maggie obliged. Cold and sick she sat down at the organ, and for the life of you you couldn't have told whether the tune her frozen stumbling fingers blundered out was "Jesus bids us shine," or "Three cheers for the red, white and blue."

Mother is away. With Goldie's help and a stepladder, a basin of water, some burnt corks, a lamp and some old clothes were carried up into the little rafted space where the squirrels hoard their winter's supply of acorns. It would have been just as reasonable to have gone into a bedroom and shut the door, but it wouldn't have been fun. Maybe little German Eva wasn't really frightened at being chased around by a young imp with black face and hands and a butcher knife, but she made a satisfactory pretense.

A little table in Jessie's bakeshop and ice-cream parlor and on it the first of the new summer drinks — a strawberry ice-cream soda, that you siphoned out noisily to the last sweet drop through a fibre straw. Gee, it was good!

Gracie's big farm home and in a small back room a giant bathtub, a cheese vat full of sour milk with a thermometer bobbing around. Grace scoops it out, runs an experienced finger down it to show the temperature the milk is kept at, throws back the thermometer and licks her finger. (Sorry, Grace).

Spring and a hollow tree trunk in the back of the vacant lot beside us.

Uncle Bill is calling.

You have heard that silly song, "I know where the flies go in the winter time."

Well, I found out where all the snakes around Oak Villa went in the winter time. They rolled and wove themselves, big and little, into a ball and holed up in that old tree trunk.

There is nothing to compare that writhing hideous twisted knot of garter snakes with, unless it is a can of lively fishworms or a platter of cold spaghetti in tomato sauce.

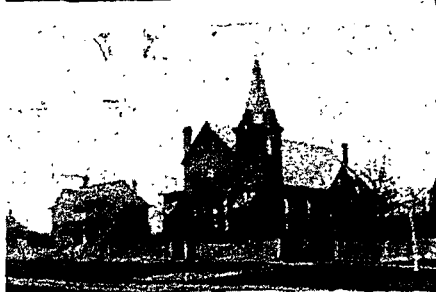
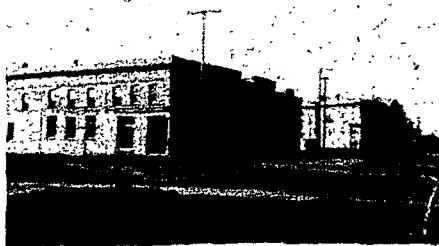
In a corral behind the barn — cattle, a carload or two ready for shipping; a sketchy shelter at one end of the corral made of a few unevenly spaced poles and a layer of straw. Nothing unusual to be seen anywhere, certainly no more from the top of the shelter than from the ground, but there was a dash of risk in parading up and down the makeshift roof, so up over the fence goes "Tommy," and in about five seconds flat, it's a toss-up as to who got the biggest jolt — the cow on whose back I lit, or I.

The terrified bawling of calves being branded and the sickening smell of burning hair and flesh; the blood-curdling screams of pigs getting a coup-de-grâce, screams that had such a human sound they turned your stomach over when they died out in a coughing, bubbling gurgle; irons being heated red-hot in the kitchen stove and a poor old white horse lying out in the yard with a gaping hole behind his ear; the far-carrying calling of endless waving lines of wild ducks and geese; what unimportant sights and sounds make up the queer pot-pourri of memories!

"Life's sweetest joys are hidden in the substantial things,
An April rain, a fragrance, a vision of blue wings."



VIEWS OF GLADSTONE 1900



VIEWS OF GLADSTONE 1900

XXVII

“Heaven knows we need never be ashamed of our tears,
for they are rain upon the blinding dust of earth,
overlying our hard hearts.”

RAINBOWS are beautiful in so many different ways—in their symmetry, in their immensity, in their softly shaded colorings. Even in their evanescence they leave behind a reiterated promise of hope over a dimmed and blurred silhouetted landscape.

Memory is like a rainbow, a beautiful living bond between today and yesterday.

It, too, has its pot of gold at the end, not all pure gold unfortunately. In among the thousand pieces, some leaden counterfeits slip. Pure fairy gold of dear sweet memories of home and loved ones; leaden memories of bad days when temper and thoughtlessness caused needless pain to those around.

Every day at noon I went home from school to our store where my Dad was always waiting for me. Past the old town pump where in winter the dripping water raised a spreading cone of white ice below that reached up and up to the icicle whiskers on the spout, past Becky's little store and over the tracks and the deep ditch where one spring Jenny pushed me into the water (she likely just got me first.)

At Becky's store, we children took a minute or so to stand and peer in the window at all the goodies displayed there, candies and cookies and fruit.

The apples were particularly fascinating, not because we wanted apples — we could have lots of them at home, but because of the polish they sported.

Privately we discussed the fact that Becky spit on them as we did on our slates before she rubbed them to the perfection they boasted.

The Chinaman sprayed water from his mouth when he put the finished gloss on the stiff shirt fronts and collars on our Dads' Sunday shirts.

We'd seen the Chinaman in action. We wanted to catch Becky.

Two iron bars crossed the show window.

One unforgettable bitter winter day, when as usual, we stopped for a look at the tempting array, I learned the hard way of the affinity of iron at a temperature of 25° to 40° below for anything moist.

Likely the goodies seen through the little bare spot in the frosted window made my mouth water.

The iron bar was level with my lips.

Automatically I wound my tongue around it.

I have heard stories of captives being tortured by having their tongues pulled out by the roots.

It's a dreadful punishment I'm here to say, for though the extreme penalty wasn't meted out to me and the roots of my tongue held, a substantial layer of skin off my tongue and lips stayed frozen on the bar.

That was a bitter lesson well learned.

Now again like that child I was, I am looking through a little window, the window of memory into the past.

It is not right, I know, to seem to end my little song of remembrance on a sad note. The sadness is only seeming.

My Paradise is gone, at least for me.

Gone are so many of the places I knew.



"Oak Villa," Summer of 1916

Gone, Oh! so many! of the friends who shared those happy days.

Of those who remain, the Bessies are Elizabeths, the Minnies are Marys or Minerva Belles, and there are no Maggies.

My Dad and Mother live only in memory, and yet if it is true that "A man's real possession is his memory, in nothing else is he rich, in nothing else is he poor," then I am indeed a millionaire.